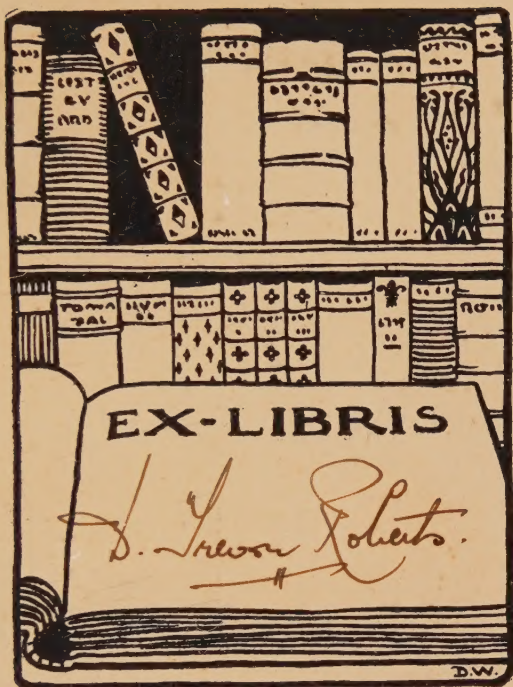


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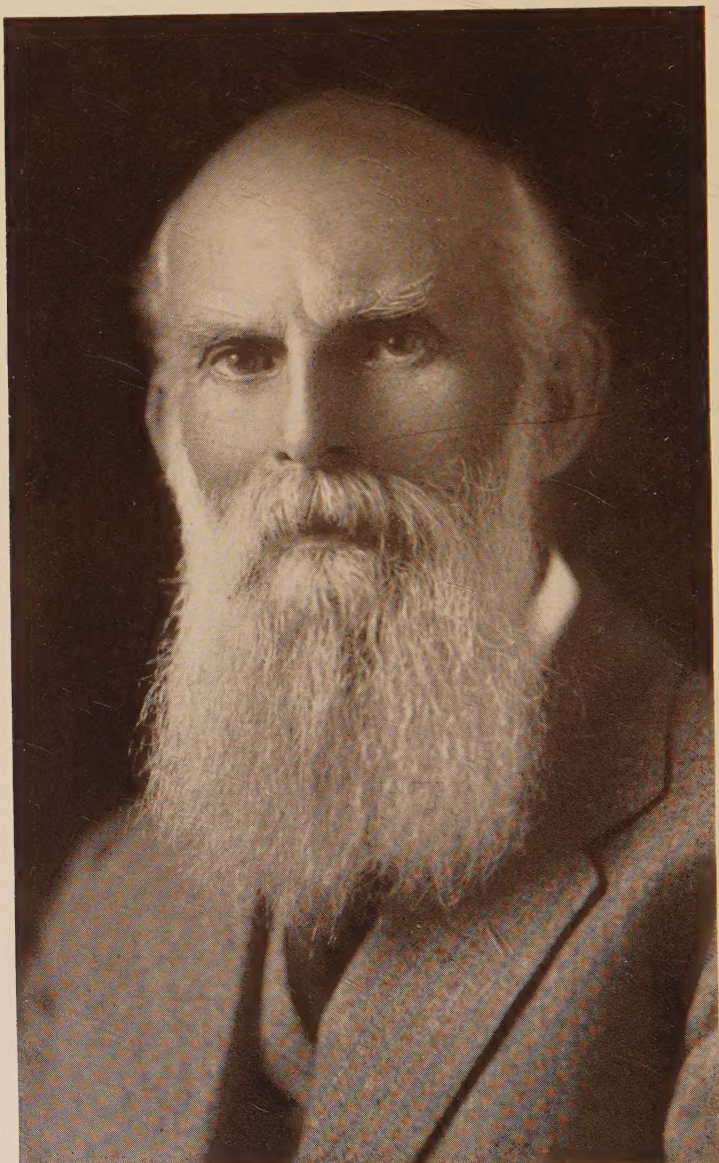


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MY BOOK OF MEMORY



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SILAS K. HOCKING

MY BOOK OF MEMORY

A STRING OF REMINISCENCES AND
REFLECTIONS BY

SILAS K. HOCKING



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DEDICATED
To the best of all friends
and comrades
MY WIFE

FOREWORD

I am not altogether to blame for the appearance of this book. For quite a long time (several years in fact) I resisted the importunities of my friends. Then two journalists whom I greatly respect joined the importunists. Why did I not write my reminiscences? I had lived a long life, I had travelled in many countries. I had met a great many interesting people, I had had a wide experience. I must have a lot of interesting stories to tell. Such a volume would be entertaining if nothing else!

After that I began to weaken—at least I found myself looking up old journals and diaries and letting my thoughts wander back and back over the long trail down which I had come.

For several months longer I hesitated. It seemed egotistical to write about oneself. Also I was not sure that outside a very small circle any one would be interested. The suggestion, however, had taken root and continued to grow.

So one day—having nothing better to do—I began to write. After that it was plain sailing except that I had more to tell than I had room for.

Foreword

Now that it is finished I am still of "doubtful mind." It is more of an autobiography than I had intended. I fear I have too frequently occupied the centre of the stage when I should have kept myself in the background.

To write about oneself is both easy and difficult. Easy from the point of view of material, difficult from the point of view of proportion and perspective. How far I have failed or succeeded I do not know.

Such as it is I leave to the kind indulgence of my friends.

SILAS K. HOCKING.

March, 1923.

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MY BOOK OF MEMORY

CHAPTER I

BEGINNINGS

MY first attempt at public speaking was in a little Methodist chapel about two miles from my home. I had only recently passed my seventeenth year, hence why I was invited or who was responsible for the invitation I was never able to discover.

Having received the invitation I lost no time in accepting it. I think I had always been ambitious to be a public speaker. Among my greatest pleasures at that time was to listen to some fluent talker haranguing a crowd. It did not matter what the occasion might be, or the subject of the address. A man who could move an audience to laughter, or it might be to tears, who could let himself go in a torrent of words, who could fire his audience with something of his own passion and sit down amidst a storm of applause, was something of a hero in my eyes, a man to be envied and admired.

I tramped for miles across country to distant villages, tramped through rain and wind and

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darkness, to listen to some temperance orator, or returned missionary, or political aspirant, or budding social reformer.

Sermons did not interest me much, but a speech, provided the speaker knew how to talk and let himself go, warmed my blood and quickened my imagination.

A Sunday-school anniversary meeting did not seem to offer much scope for a beginner, but I resolved to make the best of it. The speech took me the best part of a week to prepare. I wrote it in full, and re-wrote parts of it, and then went out into the fields and rehearsed it to the trees and hedgerows and streams until I was word perfect.

I felt a little strange sitting on the platform with a number of elderly men, but I don't think I was particularly nervous. I know I have been infinitely more nervous a hundred times since. When at length I was called upon I rose at once and commenced to reel off my speech at express speed. I never paused for a moment till I had finished. I scarcely gave myself time to take breath. I had a feeling that the smallest break would put an end to my performance. I had to keep going or fail ignominiously. The end came with startling suddenness, and when I sat down I don't know which was the more surprised, myself or the audience. I had expected to be on my feet at least twenty minutes. I was barely a third of that time, but I was so completely out of breath that it took me some time to recover.

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From almost every point of view I reckon my little speech was a sorry failure. My consolation was that I did not "break down." I had said everything that I came to say, but the saying of it was such a terrific sprint that it was without effect, at least so it seemed to me as I thought about it afterwards. Still it was a beginning, and it taught me several things. I discovered that a speech, to be effective, should be something more than a recitation, and that a pause may be more eloquent than a period.

Later in the same year I was invited to address a temperance meeting in the town of Grampound. This, by the most direct way across fields and over a windy "downs" and through narrow country lanes, meant a walk of nearly four miles to the place of meeting. This, however, did not deter me, nor did it deter a friend who had promised to accompany me to my next meeting wherever it might be. Jim was secretly ambitious to figure on a public platform himself and had prepared a little speech in the hope that a chance would be given him of trying his "'prentice hand."

We found some fifty or sixty people awaiting us in a long narrow room lit by paraffin lamps hung against the walls. To my consternation I discovered that I was the only speaker announced, and that I was expected to occupy at least forty minutes. The chairman wasted no time in making a speech himself, but at once called upon me.

Remembering my previous experiences I began

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slowly, but unfortunately my tongue soon got out of control, and the more I warmed to my subject the faster I talked, and the higher rose my voice. By good fortune, however, I had several stories which I had planned to weave into my address, and these served as a brake from time to time. But the effect of my speech at no point came up to my hopes and expectations. I could not rouse my audience as I had seen other speakers do.

Also I got terrified at the slow moving of the hand on the dial of the clock. By the time I had been talking ten minutes I had got through more than one half of my speech. To occupy forty minutes was out of the question ; to hold on for thirty minutes would be beyond my powers. I tried to think of something else to say, some anecdote or illustration that I might drag in by the hair of its head, but it seemed to me that both my brain and the clock had stopped working.

In his introduction to the "Pilgrim's Progress" Bunyan says :—"The more I pulled the more it came." But in my case the more I pulled the more it wouldn't come. I managed to keep talking for just twenty minutes and then I sat down.

Then came my friend's opportunity. At a word from the chairman he bounded to his feet and stuck. "Mr. Chairman," he managed to articulate twice in succession, but he could get no further. He gulped once or twice, rolled his eyes, stared at the ceiling, shuffled his feet, and gulped again.

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"That specimen story, Jim," I whispered. Instantly his face brightened. "Oh, yes," he said briskly. "Ladies and gentlemen, I heard a story the other day of a man who went into a public-house in the middle of the day and got beastly drunk. So long as he had any money the landlord supplied him with beer, and when he staggered out he couldn't walk straight, and he fell sideways under the window and fell fast asleep; and a man seeing him got a big piece of white paper and wrote on it in big letters, 'A specimen of the work done inside,' and pinned it on to the man, and everybody who passed stopped to read it, and some laughed and some looked serious. I reckon that paper was as good as a sermon, don't you?"

Then followed another big pause and Jim stared at the ceiling again. "I believe that is about all I've got to say," he ended lamely and sat down.

The audience cheered vociferously, after which the chairman proposed a vote of thanks to the speakers and the meeting closed.

The whole proceedings did not last three-quarters of an hour. No one offered us any refreshments or asked us a single question.

We both felt depressed, Jim because he forgot his speech, and I because the audience was so unresponsive. But every fresh attempt added something to our experience, and that was all to the good.

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A few weeks later I got switched on to quite a different track. In a newspaper or periodical of some kind I saw an announcement to the effect that the Band of Hope Union (I think) offered a hundred pounds for the best story illustrating the evils of strong drink, and after a few moments' reflection I determined to have a shot at it. Why not? Youth is nothing if not daring and optimistic. It seemed to me that I stood as good a chance of winning the prize as anyone else. Moreover a hundred pounds was such a huge sum. I became a little intoxicated at the thought of so much wealth.

Of course I could write a story! Had I not read Scott and Dickens and Fenimore Cooper and Harrison Ainsworth and Wilkie Collins and Bulwer Lytton, and dozens of other writers? It would be as easy as falling off a stool.

I spent several days in thinking out a plot, a rather tragic and blood-curdling plot, and then I walked to St. Austell and purchased several quires of exercise paper and a box of pens. This done I felt ready for the fray.

During my walk home I considered seriously what I should do with the money. It would all have to be spent, as a matter of course. What youth thinks of saving? Presents for my father and mother, books for myself, and still there would be plenty left. There seemed no end to what might be done with a hundred pounds.

The next day I settled down to work, and for

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several weeks put into it all my spare time. What it was all about I don't remember now. The only thing I can recall is that the heroine's name was Lilian, and that she was amazingly beautiful. She had blue eyes and golden hair and ruby lips and a smile that would move the heart of a mummy.

I was not long, however, in discovering that writing a story was not so easy as I had imagined. Conversations lagged. My characters seemed to have precious little to talk about. Descriptions of scenery became absurdly difficult. My plot got more and more into a tangle. The pieces of my jig-saw picture wouldn't fit. I had to re-arrange my stage, and after struggling through some half a dozen chapters, and very short chapters at that, the whole thing had got into such a hopeless mess that I gave the thing up in despair. I pushed the precious sheets to the back of a drawer and never looked at them again. So ended my earliest dreams of literary fame and fortune.

When I was about eighteen my name appeared on the St. Austell circuit plan as a Local Preacher—on trial—and six months later I was taking services in the St. Columb circuit as an "Auxiliary"; so that my parish extended from Newquay on the Atlantic seaboard to Mevagissey on the English Channel.

For the next two years my Sundays were pretty fully occupied, and many of my week-nights also. I am bound to say, however, that I

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preferred the platform to the pulpit. The platform seemed to offer more freedom of expression and a better opportunity of seizing points and illustrations that might occur at the moment. In the pulpit one had to move along clearly defined lines, to stick more or less closely to the text, to observe all the conventions. On the platform one was less concerned about form. It was like galloping across the open country instead of running between fences.

I am reminded here of a story my father used to tell of a man who lived in our village before my time. Ned was something of a character, a free-thinker, and a bit of a wag. The Rector of the parish was much concerned because Ned never went either to church or to chapel.

One day he took him seriously to task. "Edward," he said, "what do you think will become of you when you die?"

"Oh, that don't trouble me," was the laughing reply.

"But it ought to trouble you," was the solemn answer. "It is quite time you began to think seriously about your soul."

"Well, would you like to know what I really do think?" Ned inquired.

"I should like to know very much."

"Well, as I figure it out," Ned replied with a grave face, "it will be something like this. When you die and appear at the Golden Gate, St. Peter will say, 'Where do you come from?' and you will

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reply, that you were Rector of the Parish of St. Stephen's. So he will reply, 'Come inside and go *there*,' pointing to a particular spot. Then up will come say Jan Williams, and St. Peter will ask him what denomination he belonged to and he'll say that he was a Methodist. So St. Peter will say, 'Come inside and go *there*,' pointing to another place. Well, by and by I shall come up and St. Peter will say, 'Well, Edward, and what was your religion?' and I shall tell him straight out that I didn't belong to any of the sects. 'But surely,' he will say, 'you belonged to one or the other of the denominations?' And I shall say, 'No, I didn't belong to any of 'em.' 'Oh well, in that case, Edward,' he will say, 'you can come in and go where you like.'"

Well, if I may use that story as an illustration, I always felt when on the platform that I could go in and go where I liked. Nevertheless, when in the pulpit I endeavoured to conform as far as possible to rule and precedent.

Having to preach so frequently I had to make a complete change in my reading and studies. I gave up fiction for theology, and science for Biblical exegesis and homiletics. For the first time I made the acquaintance of Paley and Butler and Horne and Wesley, and Clarke and Watson, and a number of other writers whose names I regret to say I have forgotten. I suppose I became a fairly effective local preacher judging by the number of applications that reached me,

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though I was conscious all the time that I was using other men's material. That, of course, was inevitable, since I had no stores of my own. I could only give what I had received.

I can recall nothing that was remarkable in this ministry. I gave of my best and looked for no reward. Along with my fellow local preachers I experienced many hardships, tramped many miles on an empty stomach, missed my way again and again on dark nights, got wet to the skin time after time, fought my way across dreary uplands in the teeth of blinding snow storms, and often reached my home so utterly exhausted that I hardly had strength left to get out of my clothes and creep into bed.

It was all in the day's work, however. Had I been working for pay I might have complained, and thought myself hardly used ; but since it was deemed an honour to be allowed to preach at all, and I honestly believed I was doing a little good in the world, I was quite content.

I recall two or three incidents during this period that were not without a touch of humour.

Some of the places where I had to preach were ten or twelve miles away, and on those occasions I went on horseback.

I remember one windy October morning riding across a broad plateau that was sparsely covered with gorse and heather. The road was flanked on either side by a shallow ditch, beyond which was a fence of rubble and earth about three

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feet high. Suddenly a gust of wind caught my bowler hat and carried it over the fence, and left it stranded in a brake of furze some fifteen or twenty yards away.

How to retrieve my hat was a problem by no means easy of solution. Bess, the mare I was riding, stood still while I reflected, the wind meanwhile making merry with my smoothly brushed hair. Bess was by no means the most amiable of hacks, and to leave her standing in the middle of the road while I went in search of my hat would be to court disaster. The chances were she would turn round and gallop straight back home without considering me in the least. I looked about me, but there was not a tree or gate or post of any kind to which I could fasten her.

Only one thing remained. I should have to jump the ditch and fence and trust to luck for what followed. I pulled Bess round sharply and struck at her flank with my riding crop, and over she went like a bird. I rode to where my hat was imprisoned, sprang to the ground, seized my hat and jammed it on my head, and then attempted to remount. But Bess was not having any. She was evidently annoyed at being struck. She set her ears forward, showed her teeth and reared defiantly. When her feet touched the ground I tried to soothe her, patted her neck and spoke to her pleasantly ; but directly I attempted to mount up she went on her hind legs again. This happened again and again, and I began to

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fear I was hopelessly stranded. Fortunately I was young and active and carried no superfluous flesh ; so watching my opportunity I gave a sudden spring, caught the stirrup with my foot and was safely in the saddle before she had time to rear again.

Then followed the most exciting ride I ever had in my life. Bess bounded back over the fence into the road like an indiarubber ball, and rushed away at the speed of the wind. I did my best to hold her in check but without success. She had evidently got the bit between her teeth and defied all my efforts to bring her to a standstill. The road began to slant by an easy gradient into a fairly deep valley. There was a small village at the bottom, beyond which began a long ascent known as " Breakheart Hill." I knew that if I could negotiate the village without coming to grief I should be safe. So I held tight and hoped for the best.

As we neared the village the clatter of hoofs breaking the stillness of the Sabbath morning brought the inhabitants to door and window to see what was happening. A few men stepped out from the doorways, as though they intended trying to stop Bess's mad gallop, but I shouted to them to stand back, and away we sped with a clatter of hoofs that awoke all the sleeping echoes of the place.

Five or six hundred yards up Breakheart Hill and Bess capitulated, and before we reached the

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top she had settled into an easy walk and I began to breathe freely once more. I never had any difficulty with her again.

Some time later I had another small adventure with a horse, but of an entirely different kind. I was engaged to preach afternoon and evening at a village a mile or two beyond St. Austell. On this occasion I rode a neighbour's horse. Nero, as he was named, carried his master every Friday to St. Austell market, and was always stabled at the same inn. He was a well-behaved cob and quite easy to ride.

We reached the town in good time, and had only a couple of miles farther to go. Being Sunday, the Fore Street was shuttered and deserted, and Nero's hoofs echoed pleasantly from house to house. Suddenly Nero swerved to the left and before I could pull him up he was in the stable yard where he was wont to rest and feed. When I tried to get him out he began to show temper. He was not in the habit of going farther. This was his halting place and he meant to stay.

After considerable difficulty I got him back into the street again, where he tried to head for home. As this was not allowed he began to dance and caper and pirouette in a way that made me feel exceedingly uncomfortable. To make matters worse a little crowd of boys gathered to watch the performance, and appeared to enjoy it immensely. Finally as a climax to my annoyance a small boy

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shouted in a shrill voice: " I say, mister, don't you think you would be safer inside ? "

If a look could have annihilated that boy he would have disappeared in a blue flame.

Perhaps Nero thought I had been sufficiently humbled, for he gave up dancing and trotted away as meekly as possible.

One other incident I must mention associated with those early days. I was preaching in a " Town " chapel, a considerable honour for a young local preacher. It was a fairly large building with sitting accommodation for some six or seven hundred people. The ground floor was filled with tall square pews, each pew being provided with a door. One of the pews near the front was occupied by a farmer and his family. The eldest son, Harry, a young fellow of perhaps twenty-five, sat at the end next the aisle.

We were singing the concluding hymn, beginning " There is a Land of Pure Delight." The tune was evidently a favourite and the congregation took it up with great gusto. Harry stood leaning against the pew door, holding his hymn-book with both hands, his eyes uplifted, his face aglow. Perhaps he saw in imagination the green and sunlit country beyond the swelling flood. We had reached the verse—

Oh, could I make my doubts remove,
Those gloomy thoughts that rise,
And see the Canaan that I love
With unbeckoned eyes,

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when suddenly the fastening of the pew door slipped and Harry fell out with a tremendous racket and clatter, and disappeared in the narrow aisle.

The effect, to say the least of it, was startling. Most of the people in the immediate neighbourhood sat down and hid their faces in their hands. Shrill titters came from all parts of the gallery. All the members of the choir in the organ loft behind the pulpit struck work simultaneously. The collapse of the hymn was general. Fortunately the organist, who saw nothing of what had happened, kept the instrument going at full blast. The last verse was played without any voice accompaniment to speak of. Here and there a faint grunt or squeak might be heard, but its rendering, by no stretch of the imagination, could be called a success.

Harry picked himself up looking terribly shamefaced and self-conscious, and stole back into his pew, where he sat down and hid his face in his hands. I think it was only sympathy for him that kept me from laughing outright. Had he chosen the hymn before the sermon for his little performance I don't know what would have happened.

As I look back across the wide gulf of fifty years, I sometimes wonder what effect those early efforts of mine produced. I think the people who listened to me must have been wonderfully patient

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and charitable. My sermons must have seemed to them painfully crude and elementary. For myself, I have no doubt the experience was educative in many ways. I learned slowly to get my own measure, and I unlearned with equal slowness much that had handicapped me at the beginning.

Yet in and through it all ran the joy and thrill of youth, the fervour of unquestioning faith, the confidence of inexperience, the throb of hope before disillusion comes.

Youth is better than old age any day.

CHAPTER II

AMONG THE HILLS

MY first appointment as a fully accredited minister was at Pontypool. I had drifted into the ministry more or less casually. It had just happened without plan or contrivance. My inclination at the time had been in an entirely different direction. I wanted to go abroad. My eldest brother, who had settled in Los Angeles, California, had suggested that I should come out to him, and had assured me that a young man stood a much better chance of getting on in the New World than in the Old.

On the other hand I knew that nothing would please my parents so much as my becoming a minister. Also the Superintendent Minister and the Circuit authorities urged upon me the same course. I was told that my gift clearly indicated the work for which I was intended, and that I should do wrong to resist the call of the Church.

So, without resistance on the one hand, or effort on the other, a stream of kindly circumstances carried me gently on from the Quarterly Meeting to the District Meeting, and from the District Meeting to the Conference, until I found myself a recognized Minister of the Denomination.

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I had of course worked hard, read a prodigious number of books, passed a number of examinations, and preached a number of trial sermons ; but there had been no setback of any kind, no pause in the movement of the stream, no examining committee had turned me down. I was not a genius, or even brilliant, but I was sufficiently well up to the average to meet the requirements of the various Conference committees. So, for the time being, my career was settled.

I never regretted the step I had taken, never doubted that I was serving God and serving my generation ; but I never believed for a moment that the ministry was the only way in which I could serve God and serve my fellows. I did the work that first came to hand, and did it to the best of my ability, but I was always open to do any other kind of work if I believed that by doing it I could serve the general good.

I want to be quite frank on this point. During my many examinations I heard students and candidates for the ministry express themselves very definitely on having received a clear inward call, a call so urgent that they could not resist it. The work of the ministry was to be their work, and nothing else. No other kind of work would meet the case. Again and again I heard the words of the Apostle Paul quoted, " Woe is unto me if I preach not the Gospel."

I confess I rather envied some of these young men, for I had been conscious of no such call

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myself; nor could I attach the importance to the work of the ministry that they attached to it. Neither did I believe that because I had been accepted by Conference I had been admitted into any sacred caste, and that as a consequence I spoke with more authority.

It may be that this was evidence that I had never been properly called, or not called at all. Yet I do not think so. It seems to me that we are all called to do the work that lies nearest at hand, and the work we can do best. If a man has the preaching gift, he ought to preach as opportunity serves, and if he has not the preaching gift—and there is no getting over the fact that a great many ministers have not—they ought not to delude themselves that they have been divinely called to the work of the ministry.

I have watched with great interest the careers of some of the men who were most certain of their divine call, and I have come to the conclusion that in this as in other matters the best men may make mistakes. It seems a reasonable assumption that if high heaven wants a preacher the choice will fall on a man who can preach.

But this is by the way.

The Newport Circuit, of which Pontypool formed a part, was not connexionally important; nor was it in a very flourishing condition; whilst the church over which I was called to preside seemed in the last stages of decay. Hence my arrival in the town passed unnoticed. It is much

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the same in the religious world as in the social. A man is judged by the size of the house in which he lives. A minister who comes to a large and wealthy church is a man of importance from the outset. I had come figuratively to a small cottage in a mean street ; hence no one was anxious to make my acquaintance. I do not remember to have been invited to any public function or to take part in any religious service in the town outside my own church. I came "without observation," and I remained for two years unobserved.

It was a little strange to me when many years later I visited the town again and found that the biggest church available which had been hired for the occasion would not hold the people who came to hear me.

This also by the way.

For a while I felt distinctly lonely and isolated. There were very few young men in the church, and these I scarcely ever saw except on Sundays. Fortunately I became acquainted after a while with a number of theological students who were at the Baptist College less than a mile away. To rub shoulders with these young men was both mentally and morally stimulating.

The Principal of this college was a Dr. Roberts—at least I think his name was Roberts—and thereby hangs a tale.

Dr. Roberts had a twin brother who was also a doctor, not a D.D., but an M.D. These brothers

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were so much alike that it was very difficult to tell them apart. The story goes that one day a man who knew them both saw one of the brothers approaching, and felt considerably puzzled as to which it was. When he got quite near, however, he pulled up suddenly. "Doctor Roberts," he said heartily. "When I saw you coming along the street I couldn't tell for the life of me whether it was you or your brother. Now I see it's your brother."

Having to prepare two and sometimes three sermons a week I had not much time for recreation. Older ministers might preach the sermons they had prepared in other circuits, but as a beginner that privilege was denied me.

In addition to my sermons I had to prepare for a yearly examination, and as an economist I naturally used up my examination stuff in the preparation of my sermons.

I had been reading Bishop Horne on the credibility of miracles, and I decided to give my congregation the benefits of the good Bishop's reflections.

I took for my text the story of one of the New Testament miracles, I have forgotten which, and then I announced that Bishop Horne had laid down four conditions by which the genuineness of miracles could be tested.

1st. "They should be instantaneously and publicly performed." This point I elaborated,

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and passed in review a number of the miracles of the New Testament.

2nd. "They should be independent of second causes." On this point I also dwelt at some length.

"The third condition," I went on, "laid down by Bishop Horne is——" And there I stuck. I groped wildly like a man suddenly smitten blind through several moments of agonized silence. Then I turned back and recapitulated the first two points, in the hope that when I came to the third it would be there in front of me. But my hope was doomed to disappointment. "There is a third condition," I went on despairingly, "which is—which is——" But it was all to no purpose.

Sitting just under the pulpit was an old local preacher who was looking up at me with mouth half open and an interested light in his eyes.

"Brother Cantle," I said desperately. "Do you know what it is?"

"No, sir," he said with a smile. "Haven't the least notion."

"Neither have I," I replied. "So we will go on to the fourth point," which, fortunately, I remembered.

It was the first time that my memory had tricked me though not by any means the last.

The study of economics was imposed upon me by the state of my finances. My salary was £55

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per annum, out of which I paid six shillings a week for my rooms—a ridiculously small sum—and the problem I was up against was how to provide food, clothes, books, stationery, and all the other etceteras out of what remained.

I was fully resolved not to be a burden to my people. I had an idea that it would be humiliating to write home and ask for money, and yet there were so many things I wanted. Poverty is a stern teacher, but I was not long in learning how many things there were I could do without. My landlady was a cheery, good-natured soul, who mothered me to her heart's content. Her two sons were both married, and she was glad to let me have her front parlour and the bedroom above. In looking back I am inclined to think that she charged me much less for my food than she might have done.

My one complaint was her tendency to burst into song at all hours of the day. Like most Welsh people she had a good voice, and she liked to use it.

One morning while deep in the throes of composition I heard her singing lustily in the hall while dusting the furniture:—"Stand like a brick with your face to the wall." This refrain was repeated over and over again.

I laid down my pen at length and went and opened the door.

"What in the world are you singing?" I asked.

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" Oh, it's a new tune they were singing on the Tranch last night," she replied.

" But it isn't new," I said. " And you've got the words all wrong."

" Oh ? "

" The words are ' Stand like the brave with your face to the foe.' "

She laughed heartily. " Well, I thought the words were a bit curious for a hymn," she answered. Then, after a moment's reflection, " Not that it matters much anyhow." And she laughed again.

I sometimes wondered if religion accentuated people's natural idiosyncrasies and " funnyosities." I had to walk very warily if I was to avoid giving offence. If I went to tea more frequently with the Joneses than the Evanses I very soon heard of it. So many people were disposed to make grievances out of the most trifling things, and the simplest remark was sometimes twisted to mean something entirely different from what was intended.

One Sunday morning I was informed that a member of the congregation had taken offence at something I had said the previous Sunday ; so I hurried away at once to his house and found him sitting in the kitchen in a very sulky humour.

I explained in as few words as possible the object of my visit, and he answered sourly :—

" Aye, it's true eno', and I tell you I don't

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intend coming again. It ain't no fun coming to chapel to be preached at."

"But I have never preached *at* you," I protested. "Or *at* anyone else."

"Didn't you say so and so in your sermon last Sunday morning?" he demanded.

I admitted that I had said something to that effect.

"Well that were me," he flashed. "And you knowed it were me."

I spent nearly an hour with him protesting and arguing, and I am not quite sure that in the end he was fully convinced that I had not been preaching at him. However he turned up again at the evening service.

There was one man whom I offended beyond hope of forgiveness. I was preaching at the chapel presided over by my colleague. It was situated at the foot of a very steep street. During the night and until late in the morning there had been a heavy fall of snow. As I approached the chapel I noticed one of the officials descending the steep hill very carefully and keeping well in the middle of the road. He was a short man, but he made up in breadth what he lacked in height.

When about a dozen yards away he slipped and fell, and being so exceedingly round he rolled over and over, and when he picked himself up he was as white as a miller.

I tried not to laugh, but the figure he cut was so irresistibly comic that I could not help it, and

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the more I tried not to laugh the more I laughed. I apologized later, but he received all my advances in stony silence, nor did I ever get to be on friendly terms with him again.

Life among the hills of the border county was exceedingly pleasant in the summer time. Here and there the beauty of the scenery was marred by unsightly heaps of slag and rubbish drawn up from the coal pits, but nothing could destroy the splendour and grandeur of the mountains. To lift one's eyes to the hills was always to gather strength. I got into the habit, especially during my second year, of taking long tramps in various directions, and every tramp revealed some fresh beauty. But in the winter when the mountains were shrouded in mist, and the footpaths were blocked with snow, and the wind, sweeping up and down the valleys, stung like whip-cord, life was dreary and monotonous enough.

One evening I returned late from a distance of several miles. I had gone to hear a lecture, and after the lecture I went with a friend to his house to supper. The nearest way home was by a footpath along the valley. The night was dark and starless, and here and there I had some difficulty in tracing the path and finding the stiles. After a while the fields gave place to a dense wood which covered several acres. The way through the wood, however, was as wide as an ordinary country road, but as the trees met overhead, it

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was like looking through a long tunnel even in the daytime. To-night it was like looking into a cavern. After a while I was able to discern at the far end a circular patch, not of light, but less inky black than the surrounding darkness. So I kept my eye on this patch and hurried on. There was no wind, the trees seemed asleep, and not a sound broke the eerie silence. The ground was covered with a thick carpet of moss so that I could not hear my own footfalls. I would have been thankful for any kind of noise, the flutter of a wing, or the scurry of a furry creature through the undergrowth, but nothing disturbed the intense stillness. My eyes ached with straining toward the grey patch in the distance.

I kept both my hands held out from my sides as one does almost instinctively when groping through the darkness. Suddenly my right hand touched another hand—I was certain it was a hand—and my heart seemed to leap into my throat. Then a voice spoke almost close to my ear.

“ Pardon. . . . Frightfully dark, isn’t it ? ”

“ Fr-rightfully,” I stammered. And then all was silent again. I had seen no form, heard no footstep. It was as though the darkness had spoken or a ghost had swept past me. The effect was uncanny. Every nerve in my body seemed to tingle, and when at length I found myself again under the broad arch of the sky I heaved a deep sigh of relief.

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On another occasion—the night being pitch dark—I nearly walked into the canal, and should have done so had not my foot squelched into soft earth, and that fact warned me that I had got off the towing path.

During my second year in Pontypool I made the acquaintance of George Macdonald's novels, and I am not ashamed to confess that to me they were as a light shining in a dark place. I had paid no attention to Tennyson's "In Memoriam," and Samuel Cox had not yet written "Salvator Mundi." But I had read Dante's "Inferno," and Milton's "Paradise Lost," and Pollock's "Course of Time," and I was conscious of an inward revolt, vague but wholly inarticulate. I had lain awake for hours trying to reconcile infinite mercy with eternal torture, and at the end of all my mental conflicts I found myself up against a blank wall.

Macdonald cut clean through my mental tangle, and I saw a shining path beyond. It was like coming out of a dungeon into the light of day.

I knew that Macdonald's teaching was sheer heterodoxy, but that did not trouble me. He had started me on a new track and whatever happened I was bound to go on.

To-day, of course, practically the whole protestant world has come round to his view, but fifty years ago we had to fight for a foothold, and run a constant risk of excommunication. There are,

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to my mind, few things more startling than the change that has come over religious thought and opinion during the last half century, and if I have helped in any way to bring about that change I am more than grateful.

I left Pontypool as I had entered it, "without observation," taking with me an illuminated address and a complete set of Bell's "Aldine Poets." Those little green volumes have companioned me ever since.

I was sorry to leave, but connexional rules admitted, in the case of probationers, of no exceptions. Where my next halting place would be I did not know. That was in the lap of the gods, which in this case was the Stationing Committee.

CHAPTER III

IN THE FENS

LESS than three weeks after I left Pontypool I found myself in the heart of the Lincolnshire Fens. I was not of sufficient importance to command an invitation and so had to go where the Stationing Committee sent me.

The interim I spent at home in Cornwall. It was delightful to get back again to my native village, and to be once more with my own people ; and yet I quickly discovered that though nothing had changed nothing was quite the same. It seemed as though something had gone out of my life. And I tried in vain to recover it. The truth was, of course, that two years had wrought a change in me.

I had seen a little of the great world outside, had mixed with people in other spheres of life and work, had found new interests, and had looked at life and the world from a fresh standpoint.

It was a joy to see the old faces, to sleep in the old bedroom, to look at the old orchards and fields and hills, to talk to my father and mother about my work, and all that it meant ; but all the while I was conscious that nothing was quite the

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same, and that I would never be content to live at home again.

Hence when the time came for me to hie away to fresh scenes and new pastures, I not only did not regret going, I was even eager to go.

It would be difficult to imagine a greater change than from the mountains of Wales to the flats of Lincolnshire. I had, of course, heard and read about the Fens, but I was scarcely prepared for the appalling flatness of the country. From horizon to horizon, as far as eye could reach, there was not the least suggestion of a hill. How I missed the purple heights and the deep shadows, and the wooded glens and the flashing streams, no one ever knew.

I remember a few days after my arrival standing on Major Shadford's doorstep with his nephew, looking across the square. Beyond the opposite houses a mass of intensely black cloud loomed up against the pale orange of the evening sky. For a moment I was back again among the hills I had so recently left.

"How clearly the mountains stand out this evening," I remarked casually.

"The mountains?" he questioned. And then he laughed, and I laughed with him.

"You have been living among the mountains?" he said a moment later.

"Yes."

"Oh, well, the highest mountain in these

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parts is the mound of earth on which stands Hamar White's windmill."

The Spalding circuit embraced twenty-one chapels in as many different villages. It was twenty miles from end to end, and perhaps half that distance across. The one railway that ran through the district was of little use to us in getting to the various places.

Spalding, where minister number one lived, stood in the centre. I was number two, and lived at Holbeach, eight or nine miles to the south, while number three lived at Donnington, ten miles to the north. To arrange a plan by which each place got its proper share of ministerial service was a matter of no small difficulty. Spalding, with its handsome chapel, large congregation, and prosperous church, came in, of course, for the lion's share. Four Sundays out of five it would have a ministerial supply, and I discovered that I had to preach at Spalding as often as in my own particular church at Holbeach.

It took me several weeks to settle comfortably into harness. At least two weeks out of every four I would leave home on the Saturday evening and not get back again till the following Friday morning.

Intellectually the life was by no means strenuous. I had comparatively few new sermons to prepare. It was possible to preach one sermon

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twenty times over, and the temptation to preach an old sermon is always great.

I was told soon after my arrival that the principal talent required was "the walking talent." And it was not easy walking either. It was what teamsters call "collar work" all the time. It is far more tiring to walk eight or ten miles along a perfectly level road where the scenery never varies than to walk the same distance in an undulating country. One walk I particularly disliked. The road was four miles long and as straight as a rule. The end could be seen from the beginning, that is one could see a clump of trees that grew at the end. There were no other trees, no house, no hedge, no anything to break the dreary monotony. To tramp that road on a hot summer afternoon required all the grace and fortitude that I possessed.

I saw comparatively little of my colleagues, particularly of number three. We had an occasional week together for a series of meetings, for each place in the circuit had its annual missionary meeting, its chapel anniversary meeting, and its Sunday-school anniversary meeting.

I recall one such series of meetings because of a little trick number three played on me. It was in the dead of winter, and the weather was bitterly cold. We had held three meetings on three successive nights, and at the close of the Wednesday night's meeting we were entertained for the night at a large farmhouse. On the Thursday morning

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number three woke early as usual, for he was a desperately early riser, and as soon as he was dressed he came into my room.

“Wake up, you sluggard,” he bawled cheerily. “Don’t you know it is time to get up?”

“Get back to bed,” I snapped. “What do you mean by disturbing people in the middle of the night?”

“Middle of the night,” he laughed. “Why, it is getting on for seven o’clock.”

“I don’t care if it’s ten,” I complained. “I’m not going to get up yet anyhow.”

“Oh, aren’t you?” he giped, and he seized the bedclothes and pulled them clean off the bed on to the floor, and then went laughing out of the room.

“I’ll pay you out for this, William,” I called after him.

For the time, however, he had got the better of me, and the laugh was his.

After lunch we tramped off together to the next village, some four miles distant, where the last of our meetings for the week was to be held.

William was evidently in great good humour with himself. He rubbed in the advantages of early rising, and chuckled again and again at the trick he had played me.

I said little, but I was determined to get even with him. At each of the previous meetings he had spoken first, and had given the same speech each time, so that I knew it almost as well as he did.

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We had tea at the house of our chairman, a farmer and local preacher. After tea the chairman and I arranged the programme. William suspected nothing, neither did our host.

After the chairman had made his speech, instead of calling upon William to speak he called on me.

I rose at once and proceeded to deliver William's speech. I could not give it word for word as he would have done, but I gave all his arguments and anecdotes and illustrations, while he writhed on his chair as if in mortal pain.

Unfortunately for him he had not a second speech ready, hence his predicament—to me at any rate—was delightfully comic. He made as brave a show as possible, and I think he persuaded the audience in the end that I had stolen a march on him. He floundered desperately for a quarter of an hour, repeated more than once that I had cribbed all his anecdotes and illustrations (which tickled the audience immensely), and then sat down looking hot and confused.

We parted next morning the best of friends, he to return to his end of the circuit, and I to mine. I admitted that it was rather a mean trick that I had played him, and he forgave me.

"I reckon I deserved it," he said. "So we will cry quits."

I found delightful people in every part of the circuit, hospitable to their finger tips. Indeed

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I found their hospitality a little excessive sometimes, especially when I wanted an hour or two's quiet with a book.

There were odd people as well, and sometimes their oddities were a little amusing. I remember one man particularly. He had turned over a new leaf and joined the church late in life. He was intensely in earnest and profoundly ignorant. He loved prayer meetings and never missed an opportunity of giving voice to his feelings.

"Broad is the way," he cried out on one occasion. "Oh, Lord, there was a time when it weren't near broad enough for me, and I used to find myself head over heels in the dyke."

On another occasion he prayed: "Lord bless the rising generation. Thou knows when I was a lad there weren't no rising generation."

But the gem for originality was, I think, the following. (I was not present on the occasion.)

"Stir us up," he cried with uplifted hands. "We've been setting so long at ease in Zion that we've got stiff in the jints. We want ilin' we do, Oh Lord, 'ile us, 'ile us with the Isle of Patmos."

One Sunday afternoon I had a rather trying experience at one of the outlying villages. The chapel would seat perhaps eighty people on a pinch. It was just an oblong box with a lid on, and stood end on to the road. There was a centre aisle flanked on either side by forms with single rail backs. The farmers in the district used to

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drive to chapel in their gigs, and when they had stabled their horses, brought their driving whips into the chapel and stood them against the wall.

Among the most loyal supporters of the little church were two brothers named respectively Henry and Fred. They were both elderly men, quiet and unassuming. Henry was a bachelor; Fred had a wife, but no children. Mrs. Fred was a spare, active little woman, with black beady eyes and a quick alert manner. Nothing ever seemed to escape her notice.

She and her husband seated themselves three or four seats from the front, the driving whip as usual standing against the wall. Henry occupied a place on the front form.

It was a particularly somnolent afternoon. Not a breath of wind stirred the stagnant air. The wide stretch of fenland shimmered in the summer heat. My sermon was based on the story of the pillar of cloud and fire, and like Pharaoh's chariot it drave heavily.

I struggled as best I could with my sermon in that drowsy air, but I had not proceeded far before I discovered that Henry was fighting desperately to keep himself awake. Sleep, however, proved stronger than his will, his head dropped lower and lower until his chin seemed to lean on his chest, then a faint snore escaped from his nostrils.

Mrs. Fred was instantly alert. I saw her beady eyes sparkle as she peered eagerly between the shoulders of the people who sat in front of her.

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A second snore a little louder than the first, convinced her that Henry was the culprit, and that it was time to act. Instantly she seized the whip and began to pull its long handle through her right hand.

I tried to look in the opposite direction, but her movements had a peculiar fascination for me. Try as I would I was compelled to watch her.

Slowly she rose to her feet, raised the whip until its bend almost touched the ceiling, leaned forward until its lash dangled above Henry's head ; then a quick movement of the wrist, a sharp flick of the lash, and the stinging whip-cord caught Henry under the right ear with a thin "snip" that could be heard all over the chapel.

Henry sprang to his feet as though he had been shot, clapped his hand to his right ear, looked round him for a moment with a bewildered air, and then sat down, bent forward and hid his face in his hands.

What effect this little comedy had on the congregation I had no time to notice. On myself it was catastrophic. I collapsed suddenly and completely. Sitting down, I hugged myself and gurgled and choked till the seat shook under me.

How long I sat there I don't know, but when I had sufficiently recovered myself I rose and pronounced the benediction.

And now comes the sequel. About fifteen years later I wrote "The Heart of Man," the scene of which I laid in this particular district,

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and into the novel I wove the foregoing story. The book was very well received, both by the critics and the public. It ran through a dozen editions in as many years and is still selling. But the point I wish to make is that a considerable proportion of the reviewers fastened upon the chapel story as being altogether beyond the bounds of probability. They took no exception to any other part of the book, but this was too much for them to swallow. My fiction passed muster as being at least credible, but my one page of fact—no! I had clearly evolved this out of my inner consciousness.

I was well on in the second year of my stay and had begun to wonder where my next move would be. I did not want to be again left in the hands of the Stationing Committee, and sent to any out-of-the-way place where there happened to be a vacancy. Men of the first rank I knew got any number of invitations, and could always pick and choose. Men of the second rank had generally a choice of circuits. It was only men of the third rank who had to go where they were sent. So far I had had nothing to complain of in the choice that had been made for me. Pontypool was certainly one of the obscure corners of the connexional vineyard, but Spalding was much better, and stood well amongst country circuits. Still I was anxious not to be dependent on the Stationing Committee and remain ignorant to the

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last moment where my next move would be. I wanted to be independent, to be able to choose for myself, to be able to announce in the connexional press that I had accepted an invitation to such-and-such a circuit.

I was therefore much gratified one morning when I found a letter on my plate containing an invitation to a country circuit somewhere in the north of England. It was not an important circuit by any means, but it was something to have received an invitation at all; it was a step towards ministerial independence.

The day was Saturday, and I was leaving that afternoon for one of my weekly rounds, and would not be back again until the following Friday morning. Hence I lost no time in writing a letter of acceptance. I concluded that the chances were a hundred to one against my getting another invitation, and in any case "a bird in the hand was worth two in the bush."

When I had sealed and stamped the letter I stood it against an ornament on the mantelpiece, so that I might not fail to post it when on my way to the station that afternoon.

I was kept busy till the last minute, and as fate, or luck, or providence would have it, went out without the letter, and forgot all about it until I was in the train and far on my way to Spalding. Naturally I was very much annoyed, but comforted myself with the thought that my landlady would be certain to see it, and would

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post it at once. Nevertheless, the letter worried me all the week, and directly I got home I hurried to my room, and lo ! there was the letter standing against the ornament just as I had left it.

For several moments I stood still, feeling inexpressible things. I could have bitten my nails with chagrin and vexation. I had had my chance and missed it. By this time, I told myself, some other man had got the invitation.

Then my eyes fell on a letter that had been delivered during my absence. I tore open the envelope without much interest, and then my heart gave a thump. It was an invitation from Liverpool. I could scarcely believe my own eyes. It seemed too good to be true. Liverpool of all places in the country ! The very name awed me a little. Was it not the second city in the kingdom, and one of the greatest sea-ports of the world ? To think that I, country born and bred, obscure and unknown, without any standing as yet in the denomination, should be invited to minister in such a city, seemed little short of amazing. It took me some time to grasp the fact with all its implications.

Then I took the letter that had been standing on the mantelpiece all the week and tore it to pieces. That done I wrote a second letter respectfully declining what less than a week before I had so gratefully accepted. After which I wrote a letter of acceptance to Liverpool, and went at once and dropped both letters into the nearest letter-box.

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Many times since I have reflected on the importance of little things, and wondered what would have happened had I posted the first letter. A momentary forgetfulness changed the whole course of my life. In Liverpool I found my wife, the greatest good fortune that has ever come to me. In Liverpool I unconsciously gathered materials for writing "Her Benny." The writing of "Her Benny" proved the beginning of such success as has come to me. As I look at the matter to-day, it seems to me that nearly everything of importance in my life hinges on that unposted letter.

I am not pretending that I was actuated in my choice by any unselfish or altruistic motives, or that I sought guidance or waited for inspiration. Neither did I consider such questions as the greatest good of the greatest number, or whether I could be the more useful in this place or that. I want to be quite frank. I chose Liverpool because I believed that it would offer greater scope for any gifts I might possess, that it would give greater opportunities for growth and expansion, that it would bring me into closer touch with people of influence and authority, and that I should the sooner be able to take the measure of my strength or weakness.

I admit that this smacks of what is usually termed worldly wisdom, but I have yet to learn that worldly wisdom is a thing to be despised in any walk of life. A man must learn to care for

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himself before he can be of much service to others ; a failure among failures will accomplish nothing. The problems of life, however, are much too complex to be solved by any rule of thumb or by any appeal to human creeds. I followed as best I knew how the light that was in me, and I have never had reason to regret the choice.

CHAPTER IV

LIVERPOOL

BEFORE proceeding to Liverpool I received a letter from the Circuit Steward, Mr. Richard Lloyd, inviting me to stay at his house until I had found suitable rooms. Needless to say I accepted the invitation.

I learned later that it was mainly through Mr. Lloyd that I had received the call. As a member of the Connexional Committee (the denominational executive), he had seen me in Nottingham, where the committee had been sitting, and before which I, with a dozen other young men of the same year, had to appear and give an account of our stewardship, and submit to a *viva voce* examination.

On reaching Liverpool I drove at once to Mr. Lloyd's house, and was introduced to his wife and younger daughter. Miss Lloyd was somewhere between eighteen and nineteen years of age, and she paid me no overwhelming amount of attention. As the Circuit Steward's daughter she had seen a good deal of parsons, and was not greatly enamoured of them; and yet, curiously enough, three years later she became my wife. So fate flings its shuttle and selects its own designs.

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Fortunately in my case the design was exactly to my liking.

We were five ministers in the circuit, each one having his own centre for pastoral work, though there was a constant interchange of pulpits.

My particular sphere was a "down-town" church. It had been a highly respectable neighbourhood in its day, but that day was before my time. My pastoral work took me into some of the poorest districts of the city, and it was here I made the acquaintance of the originals of Joe Wragg and little Nell and Her Benny; though I had no idea then that I should ever write a story about them.

I found great pleasure in my work. It had all the charm of novelty. I was being constantly brought up against new types of people, at least they were new to me. Also the throbbing, vigorous life of a great city I found to be wonderfully stimulating.

Among Nonconformist ministers the two most distinguished were Hugh Stowell Brown and Mr. Birrell. Enoch Mellor had just left Great George Street, so that I never had the pleasure of his acquaintance. But years later, in Halifax, I heard a story about him that amused me very much.

The story goes that Mellor was preaching or lecturing some considerable distance from his home. After the service he accompanied one of the deacons to his house for supper. The deacon

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was very solicitous that Mr. Mellor should stay for the night. Mellor was quite ready to stay, but he noticed that the deacon's wife manifested no enthusiasm on the point. The deacon, however, was so pressing that he at last consented. The deacon's wife went upstairs to fetch the Bible, and Mellor went out into the hall to get his slippers out of his bag. Whilst sitting on a hall chair unlacing his boots, Mrs. "Deacon," descending the stairs with the Bible, saw a bald head which she took to be her husband's. So lifting the Bible she brought it down with a resounding smack on his bald pate. "There, take that," she said, "for inviting him to stay the night."

Hugh Stowell Brown and Mr. Birrell were the antithesis of each other. I presume Mr. Birrell had a Christian name, but no one ever called him by it. It would not seem right somehow to call him anything but "Mr." He was a spare, straight, dignified man, with a rather severe face, always well dressed, with spotless linen and an immaculate white tie. His distinguished son, the Right Hon. Augustine Birrell, bears not the slightest resemblance to his father. Whenever I see the son, I always think of the father, the contrast is so marked, so complete. Augustine, with his big shaggy head, his strong spectacles and his fine profile, always reminds me of the portraits I have seen of Thackeray. I wonder if others have noticed the likeness?

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Stowell Brown was a rather heavy, loosely built man, indifferent as to his personal appearance and rather contemptuous of the white necktie. He had a bluff, hearty manner, was excellent company, and was very fond of the fragrant weed. The story is told that one day Mr. Birrell said to him, "Brother Brown, I wonder how much a week you spend in tobacco?" "Oh, I don't know," was the humorous reply, "I expect about as much, Brother Birrell, as you spend in starch."

Quite unwittingly Stowell Brown did me a good turn. I was sitting in my room one January afternoon, intent on a book. The weather was bitterly cold with occasional showers of sleet, and as there was nothing particular to call me out of doors until my evening service, I was glad to make myself comfortable at home.

There came a ring at the front door bell, then a knock at my door, and a stranger was shown in. A young man of about thirty, tall, rather good-looking, wearing a fur-lined coat, and carrying a round sealskin cap in his hand.

I laid down my book and rose at once to greet him.

"You are a clergyman, I understand?" he questioned, with a slight nasal accent.

"I am a nonconformist minister," I replied.

He smiled pleasantly. "I don't quite appreciate the distinction," he said. "But then I'm

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not an Englishman. The fact is I want to get married."

"Yes?" I questioned.

"I was sent along to the Rev. Stowell Brown, but he happened to be out, and when I inquired if there was any other clergyman in the neighbourhood I was advised to come on to you."

"That is all right," I said. "When do you wish the marriage to take place?"

"This evening about eight o'clock, if that hour will suit you," he replied.

I could not help smiling at him. "I am afraid you will have to wait a little," I said. "Marriages cannot be solemnized after twelve, and it is now after three."

At that he laughed. "I hope you won't mind me saying so, but your British marriage laws seem to me a bit antiquated. However, that's not the point—they don't affect me you understand. I'm an American citizen, and shall be married under the United States flag. The legal part of it will be attended to by our Consul, General Fairchild. The clergyman attends to the religious side."

This was something quite new to me, and I said so.

"I can assure you, it is quite all right," he said. "I have arranged all details with General Fairchild. The clergyman takes no responsibility at all."

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“ And where is the ceremony to take place ? ”
I asked.

“ At the Washington Hotel. My fiancée comes this afternoon from the States on board the *Germanic*. The ship has already been signalled. The passengers are expected to land about five. I guess we shall reach the hotel before six.”

“ I have a service at seven which usually occupies about an hour,” I said. “ Suppose we fix the marriage for 8.15. That will give me ample time.”

“ Agreed,” he answered heartily. “ Now I will face your interesting climate once more. I mustn’t be late for the ship. Good afternoon for the present, and many thanks.”

I went with him to the door where the cab was waiting for him, and as he drove away I wondered if it were all right. I wished Stowell Brown had been at home. He was a much older man and had had a far wider experience. I was young and a little apprehensive as to the legality of the affair.

At ten minutes past eight I mounted the stairs of the Washington Hotel, and was shown into a large room where about twenty ladies and gentlemen were assembled. They were all smartly dressed, most of the gentlemen being in evening clothes

The bridegroom introduced me to the bride, and to General Fairchild, whom I knew by sight.

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Then I took my place behind a small table, book in hand, and the service began.

It was all very decorous and serious from beginning to end. I was conscious of no incongruity. It seemed to me just as fitting that a marriage should take place in a private room as in a church.

Then followed the usual hand-shakings and congratulations and good wishes, and I took my departure with a five-pound note in my pocket. Inwardly I blessed Stowell Brown then for being out of the way, and when next I met him I expressed to him my gratitude. It was my first experience of the kind and the last. What became of the happy couple I do not know. I never saw them again or heard of them.

During my second year the city was tremendously moved by a mission conducted by Moody and Sankey. It was their first visit to England, but their fame had preceded them. A big committee was formed comprising members from all denominations. Large sums of money were subscribed, and a vast wooden tabernacle erected on some waste land at the back of the municipal buildings. The whole town was on the qui vive, and most churches gave up their ordinary week-night services while the mission lasted. From the point of numbers and enthusiasm the mission was an immense success. Between two and three thousand people crammed the tabernacle after-

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noon and night, and late comers had to remain outside. The inquiry room was packed after every service. For the moment nothing else seemed to be of importance, and little else was talked about.

We kept our Sunday services going with attenuated congregations. Most of our energy was spent at the mission. Our ordinary hymns and tunes seemed heavy and lifeless after the jingle of "Songs and Solos." Our ordinary services seemed to lack verve and go. Only at the tabernacle, packed like herrings in a cask, did emotion boil over. What mattered it that we had to sit on bare boards, that the floor was covered with sawdust, that ventilation was bad, that the air reeked with perspiring humanity? We thought of none of these things. We listened entranced to the little bearded man on the platform, and wept over the stories he told. And surely never had a man such a stock of stories as Moody had, and nearly all of them tear-compelling, and surely no man could tell a story better than he.

Then came the end. The evangelists took their departure to some other town. An attempt was made to carry on the services by local ministers, but it was a sorry failure. Emotion had exhausted itself. Enthusiasm was dead. Nothing was left but to garner the fruit.

A complete list of all who passed through the inquiry room was kept, with their addresses, and the churches they wished to join. Less than

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twenty names were sent to me. I looked them up at once. Some had evidently given wrong addresses, for I could not find them. Others stated quite frankly that they had gone into the inquiry room out of curiosity, others that they had merely accompanied friends, others that they had come to no decision whether they would join a church or not. Two only were left, young people of my own congregation. My colleagues had a similar experience.

I am not suggesting that the mission was a failure. Spiritual results cannot be measured by counting heads. The immediate harvest—to some at least—was bitterly disappointing. That, however, is no new experience. The seed falls by the way-side, or among thorns, or in stony ground. No worker in the great field of the world is ever satisfied with the result of his labour. We have to work and wait and hope for the best.

In addition to my “down-town” church I had two small places to look after on the other side of the river, one at Birkenhead, and the other at Seacombe. In those days there was no tunnel, and all journeys to the other side had to be made by ferry-boat. I remember one evening making my way down to the landing-stage in a rather thick fog. The lights gleamed faintly in the streets and on the pier head; and grew ever more faint as the minutes passed.

The lumbering ferry-boat moved out at length from the landing-stage, and we found ourselves

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in absolute darkness. For a few minutes we churned our sightless way and then stopped ; then on again and another stop. I stood leaning against the bulwarks on the main deck, and strained my eyes into the darkness, but could see nothing. The Liverpool lights had disappeared, the Woodside lights had not yet come into view. The river was full of craft. From every side came the hooting of sirens and the screaming of whistles. Big ships were at anchor, smaller craft were trying to feel their way up or down the river, while our lumbering ferry was aiming to nose her way straight across. What progress we had made I had no means of judging. A fellow passenger by my side complained that we stopped oftener than we moved. As he was out of temper and anxious to get to his home I did not argue the point with him. It was certain that if we moved forward for two minutes we stopped for five. I pitied the pilot at the wheel. It seemed hopeless trying to steer a boat in such bewildering darkness. A little later I began to pity myself. Any moment we might bump into something or be bumped into. Also my little congregation would be waiting for me on the other side.

Ten minutes passed, twenty minutes, thirty minutes, and still the Birkenhead lights had not come into view. We were out on the dark river somewhere, but where heaven only knew. If the engines were not propelling us the tide was drifting us, but whether up or down the river I did not

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know. Things began to look serious. All around us the hooters and whistles were braying and screaming into the fog, our own hooter answering every few seconds. I ceased to worry about my congregation, and began to feel concern for myself. I did not want to be marooned on the river all the night, even if we escaped being run into.

At length a shout was raised on the other side of the boat and we scurried across as quickly as possible. Out of the gloom appeared faint blobs of light. Slowly and silently we drifted towards them. At last we were safely across the river. We bumped against the landing-stage and the engines stopped. The gangways were let down, and off we hurried. Half-way across the landing-stage I stopped and peered round me. Where was I? What had happened? This was not the Woodside landing-stage. Then I smiled broadly and cheerfully. We were back at Liverpool again! How the Birkenhead people got home that night I do not know.

I liked Liverpool so much that I would gladly have settled down there for good. It was big enough to offer the fullest scope for one's energies and yet not so big that one was lost in the crowd. Also it was public spirited enough to meet all one's intellectual needs. A free library and reading room, where one could get almost any book one needed, and see all the latest magazines and reviews, proved an inestimable boon. In my previous circuits no such institutions existed. If

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I wanted a new book I had to buy it or go without, and as money was scarce it was generally a case of going without.

I had always been a lover of music, and in Liverpool I got an enlarged conception of what music really meant, and to what magic heights it could climb. St. George's Hall boasts one of the finest organs in the kingdom, and Mr. Best was a very prince of organists. I question if England has produced a finer. His recitals were a revelation to me.

Then for the first time I heard all the great oratorios, performed by immense choirs and full orchestras, whilst the finest singers in the country were engaged for the solo parts. In addition scarcely a week passed that there was not a concert in the fine Philharmonic Hall.

Art was encouraged by a yearly exhibition of modern pictures as well as by the permanent collections in the Walker Art Gallery ; and crowning all this we had lectures on every conceivable topic. It was in St. George's Hall I heard Mr. Swan, and saw one of the first exhibitions of electric lighting. It was in the Mount Street Institute I first saw and heard Mark Twain. He lectured on " Our Fellow-Savages, the Sandwich Islanders," and as an encore told the story of the " Jumping Frog."

One of his quaint remarks I well remember. " Somewhere in the Sandwich Islands there was a mountain. It was a very high mountain, so high that on the top of it it was freezingly cold ; indeed

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it was so cold that you couldn't speak the truth" Then he paused for a moment, and with a twinkle in his eye added, " I know that's a fact because I've been there."

Liverpool was not a literary centre, and yet it boasted a number of able writers and journalists. Edward Russell had already won fame in the field of journalism and as editor of a great daily paper. His was a well-known figure in the city, and a gracious personality. It was Ashcroft Noble, I think, who edited a weekly literary paper called " The Argus," and a regular contributor was Hall Caine. I knew neither of them at the time, though years later I became acquainted with both. My wife's only brother, who was an M.A. and D.Litt. of London University, and held an honorary Chair of Phonetics at Liverpool University, contributed occasional articles to a number of English and German reviews, and later assisted Dr. Murray of Oxford in the preparation of his great dictionary ; but he has left behind him no complete and handy record of his literary output. Moreover it was only to scholars that his work appealed.

For myself I had written nothing up to this time except sermons and speeches, and it appeared likely that I should go on writing sermons and speeches to the end of the chapter. Also I did not think—nor do I think now—that such compositions are helpful to the cultivation of a true

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literary style. To write for the Press is one thing, to write for public utterance is quite another. In writing a sermon or a speech one has always an imaginary audience in front of one, and one writes as one wants to talk. One knows that one has to be clear, simple and direct, that it is necessary sometimes to sacrifice smoothness and balance for the sake of clearness and effectiveness. One has to make one's points without ambiguity, sometimes to repeat them. In short one writes, not something that has to be read, but something that is to be talked. Every minister who knows his business keeps his audience in view all the time he is writing, shapes his sentences in such a way that they will catch the ear, aims to be arrestive rather than literary, else his sermon will be a mere essay and will probably soothe his audience to sleep.

Hence good writers are often bad speakers, and effective speakers are often very clumsy writers. If a man spends years in cultivating the "to-be-spoken" style, that style for good or evil will stick to him. Like habit it will become second nature

CHAPTER V

MY FIRST BOOK

HAVING scrambled through all my examinations, and been received into what is termed "full connexion," I was now entitled to a furnished house, so I accepted Burnley as the most promising sphere that offered.

I had never been in Burnley or anywhere near it, but I knew that connexionally it stood well, that as a "circuit" it was quite equal to Liverpool. There however the equality ended.

Liverpool, with its spacious squares, its splendid parks, its fine public buildings, its magnificent waterway, its miles of crowded docks, had a dignity and greatness all its own. Moreover, it breathed an atmosphere of culture, it encouraged the arts, particularly music and painting, it had its coteries of literary people, it was cosmopolitan.

Burnley could lay claim to none of these things. It was just a big, dirty, over-grown manufacturing town. It lay along a deep valley, flanked by bleak and, for the most part, tree-less hills. Our house was on the hillside overlooking the town, and from the dining-room window we could count nearly a hundred tall chimneys that belched out a continuous cloud of smoke from dawn to dark.

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The most noteworthy building in the town was "Brunswick Chapel," the centre of my ministry, a big square erection that would seat sixteen hundred people. The congregation was composed of say eight-tenths mill operatives, the rest shopkeepers and manufacturers.

The morning after our arrival we were startled out of our sleep by an immense rattle and clatter along the cobbled street, as though a regiment of cavalry had been suddenly let loose on the town. There seemed to be no end to it. It grew steadily louder and I sprang out of bed and hurried to the window, wondering what the din and commotion could mean. Directly I had pulled up the blind the secret was revealed. Hundreds of men and women, lads and girls were hurrying to the mills ; all wore clogs on their feet, and it was just the click of iron-shod clogs on the pavement that produced the din. The noise died down almost as suddenly as it arose, and then began the hum of machinery and the rattle of looms which went on for the rest of the day. One did not notice these noises after a while, and was only dimly conscious of the smell of oil and size and cotton waste that pervaded the town.

Yet for a week or two I was immensely sorry for myself, and even more sorry for my young wife. It was her first experience away from home, and it required a good deal of courage to settle down contentedly amid such strange and uncongenial surroundings.

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We were fixed for a year in any case and, willy-nilly, had to make the best of it. Had anyone told me during those first few weeks that I should remain four years I should have said impossible. Such, however, proved to be the case.

As we got to know the people we learned to appreciate their sterling qualities. They were rough and, for the most part, uncultured, but they were quick-witted and generous. They were aggressively independent, and had no respect for persons. Jack was as good as his master, and from his own point of view a little better.

My congregations at "Brunswick" were the largest I had known. The singing was excellent, and the services generally went with a swing. The great day of the year was the Sunday-school Anniversary, the huge chapel being generally crowded at each of these services, and the collections for the day during each of the four years of my stay never fell below £150.

The star preacher of the denomination at that time was the Rev. John Gutteridge, a minister without charge. Mr. Gutteridge had very considerable oratorical gifts. His voice was flexible and resonant, and he knew how to use it to the greatest advantage. He never mumbled his words or dropped his voice at the end of a sentence, as so many ministers do. His gestures were graceful and never overdone. He was not a great preacher. His sermons were emotional and persuasive rather than intellectual, but he could sway an audience

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as a cornfield is swayed by a passing breeze—now to smiles, now to tears—frequently to tears, for he could get a sob into his voice with the utmost ease. I have an impression that he was unknown in London, but in the provinces, from Penzance to Newcastle, he was a familiar figure. People would tramp miles to hear him preach and think themselves well repaid if they stood during the entire service.

Gutteridge used to tell a story of a working man who visited him when he was laid up in bed with a badly bruised foot. Before leaving, the man knelt by his bedside and offered a prayer. Amongst other things he prayed that Mr. Gutteridge's affliction might be "putrefied to his eternal good."

When he rose from his knees and prepared to go, Mr. Gutteridge thanked him for his visit and for his prayer. "But William," he said, "you should be more careful in the use of words." He then went on to explain the meaning of putrefaction. William listened with a puzzled face and half-closed eyes, and when Mr. Gutteridge had finished he scratched his head and smiled.

"Ah weel, Mr. Gutteridge," he said, "God didn't hear it that way," and without further words left the room.

I have frequently noticed that uneducated people, like children, have a fondness for long and to them unfamiliar words, words they have heard but of which they have failed to grasp the mean-

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ing. I knew a preacher in Lancashire who rather startled his congregation one Sunday morning. In making the announcements he referred to a bazaar they had held during the previous week.

"You will be glad to hear, my friends," he said, "that the results of the bazaar exceeded our most sanguinary expectations."

In the present day such a display of ignorance would be unpardonable, but it must be remembered that fifty years ago, and even less, many of the older ministers, especially in the younger branches of Methodism, were entirely self-taught. They were taken from the mine and the mill and the workshop, and rushed into the ministry without any previous training. Circuits were in need of men and men had to be found. Those who were selected did their best in most cases to educate themselves, though occasionally with very indifferent results. One of my early colleagues had been a village tailor. He left school when he was nine, and from the age of fifteen had been left entirely to shift for himself. He was a deeply pious man and eloquent in an uncultured way. He naïvely confided to me one day that he understood the purpose of the "haspirate" was "to give hemphasis to certain words."

Speaking of emphasis reminds me of a story I heard of a Cornish local preacher who took for his text the story of the man sick of the palsy. By way of introduction he retold the story in his own words, adding a touch here and there from

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his own imagination. He spoke of the man's childhood and youth, of the handicap he suffered at school and at play, of the old women who had used their charms and incantations, and the quacks who dosed him with physic, of the money his father had spent in getting the best medical advice, of the hopes raised in him by each new method of treatment ; and still the years slipped away and he got no better. " Until, brethren," said the preacher, " in the language of my text, he was *sick* of it ! "

During the last four or five decades the Methodist pulpit has no doubt gained enormously in culture. No young man to-day is admitted into the ranks of the ministry until he has passed through the denominational college. Many of them continue their studies at one or other of the universities until they have won their degrees.

This is no doubt as it should be. A minister of all men should be abreast of the times and should be able to give a reason for the faith that is in him. And yet I sometimes fear that we are in danger of stressing culture over much. A man may be very learned and yet not particularly wise, especially in winning souls. My complaint against our theological colleges is that they turn out men nearly all of the same pattern. They are as alike as peas in a pod. They have the same style, the same methods, the same outlook, and often the same restricted vision. If they ever had any originality, any personality, any individuality, it

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has disappeared. They seem to have been melted down into the same mould and turned out as smooth and colourless as a blancmange.

This is not true of all, of course. There are splendid exceptions, but it is true of far too many. They seem afraid to let themselves go, afraid to be themselves.

The greatest preachers I have known were individualists. They conformed to no pattern, built themselves on no particular style, copied no professor. They were themselves, original, fearless and daring. Their individualism, their personality, leaped out at every point.

I believe with all my heart in an educated ministry, but I would like an education on broader lines, an education less exclusive than that given at our theological colleges, less bookish shall I say, and more human. Many of our ministers seem to live in a little world of their own, an intellectual world it may be, but essentially narrow. They spend their days with critics and commentators and theologians. Biblical criticism and theological niceties have become an obsession with them. They seem unable to get out into the greater world of men and women, and the things that matter. They are so constantly digging away among the obscurities of texts and dogmas that the great humanities of the Bible appear to be overlooked.

I may be mistaken, but there seems to me to be a growing tendency to approach the scriptures with a magnifying glass or a microscope. Every

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line and curve is carefully traced, every variation or apparent discrepancy hunted down, every incidental word or sentence laid under the lens and a most laboured and painstaking effort made to find some spiritual significance in the most trifling historical incident or fact. They put their eyes so close to the picture that they see every spot of paint, every mark of the brush, but fail to see the picture as a whole, its massed glow of colour, its wide sweep of sky and plain and far-off range of hills.

I remember listening to a Bible reading by Dr. Campbell Morgan, illustrated by diagrams which he deftly traced on a blackboard with a piece of chalk. The whole thing produced in me a feeling of amazement. I knew the story of Cain and Abel almost by heart, but I had never before looked at it through a microscope. As Dr. Morgan pictured the story a dozen new points leaped into view. There was not a turn or twist of the narrative that had not some spiritual significance. The casual and the obvious became of vital historical and moral importance. There did not seem to be a conjunction or an interjection or even a full stop that was not aglow with meaning.

At the close of the meeting, as we walked away together towards his house, I said to him in a jocular tone, "I wish you would take one of my stories and treat it as you treated that Bible story this afternoon."

"Why?" he questioned.

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“ Because you would see in it so much more than I ever saw.”

“ Do you suggest,” he said, “ that I see more in the Bible than it really contains ? ”

“ Frankly, yes,” I answered.

He looked at me rather sorrowfully, I thought, and then proceeded to show me the error of my ways.

“ I can’t help it,” I said, when he had finished. “ It seems to me that your worship of the letter is narrowing and dwarfing. ‘ The letter killeth.’ Christianity is greater than the book, as the lake is greater than the spring that feeds it.”

However, we ended where we began, as we were bound to do. I may be altogether wrong, but as an old man I must follow such light as I have. In my busy life I have mixed with all sorts and conditions of men, with parsons and politicians, with journalists and authors, with poets and philosophers, with workers and dreamers, with men of affairs, and men in the street. I have listened to their talk and heard their views, and I am convinced that what is wanted in the pulpit to-day is not learned disquisitions on texts, but the application of the broad spirit of Christianity to the needs of a suffering world.

I am afraid that if by any chance these reminiscences should fall into the hands of some of my clerical friends they will trounce me unmercifully. They will tell me, I expect, that I am out of date,

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that I am paddling round in a backwater, that I am out of the main stream, and that I am unaware of what is happening in the theological world, that the higher authorities are against me.

Well, be it so. I am reminded of a local preacher who attempted an exposition of a rather difficult passage in one of St. Paul's Epistles. He laboured at it for some considerable time while his congregation looked at him with a bored expression on their faces.

"Perhaps some of you don't agree with me," he said at length in a challenging tone, "and I admit if you don't you are not alone. I've consulted Adam Clarke and he's agin me, I've looked up Benson's Commentary and he's agin me. I turned to Barnes' Notes this morning and he's agin me. But what of that? I'm agin them."

The story needs no application. But like Bunyan's Pilgrim I find I have wandered off into By-path Meadow, so I will retrace my steps.

In Burnley I was by no means overworked. Most of my evenings I had at my own disposal, which enabled me to get through a good deal of reading. Also I wrote one or two articles which appeared in the Connexional Magazine. Then almost unwittingly and without premeditation I slipped into fiction.

I had planned to go out on a round of visits; when I opened the door I was met by a deluge of rain accompanied by a raging wind. For a

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moment I hesitated, then I turned back, hung up my hat and coat and retired to my study.

For awhile I sat staring into the fire, listening to the wind rumbling in the chimney and the beating of the rain against the window. Perhaps it was the voice of the wind and rain that sent my thoughts trailing back and back to the days of my boyhood.

Suddenly I had a picture of a little fishing village on the north coast of Cornwall, with the waves breaking on the rocks outside. Then I saw the beginning of a story, but only the beginning. I turned at once to the table and began to write. It might become something or nothing. I had no plan, no plot. I could go on at any rate until I came to a full stop.

Words flowed easily enough. A few characters began to gather on my little stage, adventures loomed dimly in the distance. I began to enjoy myself. Time passed unheeded, and when my wife summoned me to tea I was amazed that the afternoon was so far spent.

After tea I returned again to my story and wrote on till dark.

As the story grew my interest increased and I spent all the time I could spare adding to the steadily growing pile of manuscript. After a while my wife became curious. I was spending much more time than usual in my study, not reading, but writing. What was I writing?

For awhile I hesitated to tell her. I think I

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was a little ashamed. On the face of it I was wasting my time. The whole thing would probably be a fiasco. What did I know about writing stories? Besides, might I not employ my time more profitably? No man likes to look foolish, especially in the eyes of his wife.

However, I took my courage in both hands and told her. What she thought of my escapade I do not know. Anyhow she did not discourage me. It has never been her role to discourage me in any of my undertakings. So I went ahead, not because I expected to profit by it, but because I had become interested in my characters, and was anxious to see what would become of them, for as yet I was unable to see how the story would end.

When I had written perhaps 25,000 words the editor of one of the local papers called to see me one afternoon and stayed to tea. Over the table we fell to talking about journalism, and this led me to tell him about my effort in fiction. He asked to be allowed to look at the manuscript, and to this I consented, and he took it away with him. The next day he called again.

Would I allow him to publish it as a serial in the *Advertiser*? He could not afford to pay me anything. The paper was only just paying its way.

This required consideration; but at length I consented on condition that my name did not appear. The following Saturday the first two chapters were published.

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I had now to work overtime in order to complete the manuscript in time, and when the story had run its course in the *Advertiser* I sent printed slips to Messrs. Ward and Lock, and to F. Warne and Co. The former returned the slips with thanks, the latter offered £15 for the copyright. I accepted the £15 and felt immensely pleased with myself and with the world generally.

In those days £15 seemed a considerable sum. Moreover it was the first money I had ever earned by my pen and it was only natural I should feel elated.

In due course the little book appeared in Warne's Star Series, price eighteenpence. Never shall I forget the thrill of delight with which I handled the little volume. It was a real book, bound in figured cloth and gilt lettered. Never did a mother gaze with more rapture on the face of her first-born than I gazed on the cover of that small volume.

Somebody has said that no man ever wakes his second baby to see it smile ; and the pity of it is, 'tis true. No second rapture is quite equal to the first. Repetition dulls the fine edge of delight. Nowadays when I have finished correcting the proofs of a book I never want to see the thing again. But that first literary bantling of mine was not to be measured by ordinary standards. It was unique, wonderful, almost sacred. I read it and re-read it, and saw new beauties every time I turned its pages, beauties

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which I hoped other people would see. Of course they never did. I cannot find them myself now.

Fortunately the thing was too small for the critics to notice, and so I was saved the pain of seeing it smacked and cuffed and abused.

I believe it sold fairly well as one of a series, a series composed mainly of reprints of popular American stories. That was one reason I expect why people who did not know me concluded that I was an American, that, coupled with the peculiarity of my name.

A few years later "Alec Green" was lifted out of the comparative obscurity of the Series, printed on thicker paper, illustrated and bound to match my other books. Alack how times flies! My first literary baby is more than forty years old now, and is still going strong.

In Burnley the little book sold like hot cakes, and I became a person of—what shall I say?—distinction is too strong a word. Anyhow authors were not so common then as now, and the young people of the town at any rate regarded me as something a little out of the common.

But there were a few elderly people of the rigid, strait-laced unco' guid type with whom I lost caste. Novels and the theatre they placed in the same category. Both were agents of the devil. How could I preach the Gospel and at the same time write what was not true?

One dear old man named Aspden rather effectually cornered me one day. It was his boast

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that he had never read a word of fiction in his life. He would not do such a thing for his soul's sake ; but he read " Alec Green " with immense gusto, and believed that every word of it was true. How could he believe anything else since I had written it ? He had great faith in me and a great affection for me.

" I've a grand idea, Mr. Hocking," he said as he greeted me.

" Yes ? " I questioned.

" We want to raise some more money for the missionaries," he said.

" Well ? "

" The missus and I have talked it over and we're both agreed that if you will invite ' Alec Green ' to come to Brunswick and give a lecture on his adventures, it'll draw a gradely crowd, and we'll get a fair clinker of a collection."

Well what could I say ? He had me fairly stumped. I did not want to disillusion the dear old man. I could not tell him the " Alec Green " as a real flesh and blood man did not exist. To have done so would have destroyed his faith in me at a blow.

" I'll think about it, John," I said at length, clutching at the only means of escape that seemed open to me.

Well, I did think about it, not only then but many times since.

CHAPTER VI

“ HER BENNY ”

IT was during the second year of my stay in Burnley that I found myself in the midst of a very serious strike. Whether the manufacturers wanted to reduce wages, or whether the operatives wanted more pay I do not remember now. There had been considerable discontent for some time, and mass meetings were held here and there. Two or three of these meetings I attended. I was anxious to hear what was being said, what line of argument was being pursued. I was not very well versed in economic questions, and knew very little about labour conditions. I had been taken through two or three cotton mills, and had seen the men and women at their work, and I had not been very favourably impressed. The hot steamy atmosphere was appalling, the smell of oil and size nauseating, the rattle of looms and the noise of hundreds of flying shuttles deafening and, to me, intolerable. Yet the operatives who had been brought up to this kind of thing almost from childhood seemed to think nothing of it. They were cheerful and light-hearted, and as ready for a bit of fun as any people I had ever met.

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Nevertheless, I felt that whatever their wages might be they deserved all they got. As a matter of fact I knew that hundreds of families had much more to keep house on than I had ; but that was not the point. Theirs was a treadmill existence. Every morning they had to be at the mill gates before the clock struck six. Every moment of their working day they had to keep their eyes fixed on the flying shuttle, and most of their meals were a hurried scramble against time. It was not surprising, therefore, that so many of them suffered from decayed teeth and impaired digestion, and that the general average in physique was low, not to say dwarfed.

My sympathies therefore were on the side of the workers. I had a fairly clear idea how I should feel if I had to spend my life under such conditions.

On the other hand the mill-owners complained that their warehouses were stacked with goods that they could not sell. Others told me they were running their mills at a loss, and very few of them, whatever their bank balances may have been, showed any outward sign of wealth. I had a number of manufacturers in my congregation and not one of them kept a carriage or lived in a big house. My next door neighbour, whose house was the exact size of mine, employed hundreds of hands in his mill, and yet in appearance he was no more prosperous than myself, and his wife dressed no better than mine. As far as I could see it was

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the middle man, the merchant, who made most of the money.

Anyhow, I was anxious to hear all sides of the question, and keen on studying the psychology of crowds. The leader of the strike party in Burnley was a young man with a fair moustache and a shock of unkempt hair of the same colour. I was told that he was a tailor by trade and had never worked in a cotton mill in his life. I suppose he got into his position as leader through his ability to talk, and certainly he was an adept at haranguing a crowd. I almost envied him his gift of fluent and graceful speech. I listened to him one evening in the market place for nearly an hour, and during all the time words poured from his lips in an unbroken torrent. The crowd hung upon his lips as though their life depended on it. Anyone could see that he fired them with his own passion, stirred them with his own enthusiasm, communicated to them his own intensity of feeling. Such argument as there was in his speech may be summed up in a single sentence: “Labour created the wealth, and therefore labour should have the first and biggest share of it.” The economic side of the question he did not touch. The speech was not argumentative but declamatory. The mill-owners were vampires, the operatives slaves.

The crowd was composed almost entirely of young men and women. They laughed, they cheered, they shouted, they even danced. It was

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evident they were all for a strike. They wanted a holiday. A few weeks "laking" they would enjoy. The older people, the men with young families, kept away. The young people were in the majority and their votes would decide the question.

The strike lasted eight or nine weeks, lasted till the people had spent all their money, till they were heavily in debt to the shop keepers, till their credit was entirely exhausted, till want began to pinch their stomachs, and then the rioting began.

This movement frankly puzzled me. It spread like an epidemic. It seemed to be in the air and moved on at a steady pace as though carried by the wind. It broke out I think at Blackburn.

"I shouldn't be surprised if it doesn't reach Great Harwood by to-morrow," said an old weaver to me.

"Why?" I asked.

"Oh, such things always move along that way," he replied.

Sure enough on the morrow we heard that rioting had "broken out" at Harwood.

"It's movin' on," said the old weaver when I met him next day in the street. "Happen it'll be in Accrington to-morrow."

And the old man was right.

Other people talked in exactly the same way. The dread thing was coming steadily and surely.

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“It will be in Padiham next,” they said. “By Frida’ or Saturda’ at latest it’ll be i’ Burnley.”

And they were right. It was in the air. We all felt it coming, as we felt the approach of a thunderstorm. There seemed to be a great stillness over the town, and everyone waited anxiously and expectantly.

It broke out on Friday evening.

Fortunately my wife, with our baby girl, was visiting her people in Liverpool, and I had gone out to tea with some friends at the farther end of the town.

When I returned I saw the wreckage of my neighbour’s piano lying in the front garden. The rioters had broken into his house early in the evening, and after smashing a lot of furniture and pictures and ornaments, had bundled the piano through the dining-room window and then had deliberately torn it to pieces, after which they proceeded to work their will elsewhere.

They left my house and the other houses in the terrace untouched. They were out to have their revenge on the mill-owners. It was a ghastly night that followed, especially for the employers of labour. The next day, for the only time in my life, I heard the Riot Act read. By evening the soldiers occupied the town.

A week or ten days later the mills began to hum again. I think the operatives were glad to get back to work. A week or two’s “laking” might be well enough, but when the weeks ran

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into months it was a different proposition. Sitting at home or loitering at street corners week after week became irksome in the extreme.

The threads of life were picked up again without fuss and with very little talk. It was not a subject to be discussed. Nobody had gained anything, nearly everybody, either directly or indirectly, had suffered loss. The employees had lost their wages and their savings, the employers had lost their profits, the shop-keepers had empty tills and heavy book debts, all the churches were poorer financially, philanthropic organizations languished, goodwill in countless instances had been destroyed.

It was the old story, and yet somehow the lesson is never learned. The failure and folly of force is writ large on every page of our history, but we refuse to heed. Our methods are still those of the cave-dwellers. Directly a dispute arises we sally forth with our clubs. That most of the suffering falls upon the innocent never seems to occur to the combatants, or if it occurs to them they are too selfish to worry. Lock-outs and strikes are still the order of the day, and one almost despairs sometimes of the world ever rising above the supreme folly of war.

Soon after the strike I began to write my little book "Her Benny," a book, by the by, which has been translated into I do not know how many languages, used as a popular reading with magic lantern slides, worked up into a service of

“Her Benny”

song, filmed for the cinema with great success, and sold not by the score but by the hundred thousand.

I began to write it one Saturday evening after dinner. During the afternoon I had been distributing prizes to the successful competitors in an examination inaugurated by the Sunday School Union.

Whilst the chairman was delivering a rather wordy speech, I glanced at the prize books which were laid out on the platform close at hand. One small volume arrested my attention. It was a story of street life, somewhat on the lines of “Jessica’s First Prayer.” I ran through it hurriedly for I did not know at what moment the chairman would bring his extended remarks to a close.

My feeling was that the story was not true to life or to fact. I had lived and worked among the poor, and in the slums of a great city, and the question that arose in my mind was, could I write a better story built on my own experience? I had abundance of material, but had I sufficient skill and imagination to lick it into shape?

As I made my way home I turned the matter over and over in my mind. The picture grew unconsciously. Before dinner was over it had obsessed me, I could think of nothing else.

When the table was cleared I got out pen, ink and paper, and dropping into my easy chair before the fire with my writing pad on my knees began

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to write. My wife sat on the other side of the fireplace busy with her sewing. She knew me sufficiently well by this time to be aware that when I had got some new idea into my head or a fresh bee in my bonnet, I was generally oblivious to everything else, and might as well be left undisturbed.

I wrote steadily until bed-time, by which time I had broken the back of the first chapter, and I scarcely altered a word of it before sending it to the press.

Of course this kind of work could only be done at odds and ends of time. My circuit duties came first. Sermons and speeches had to be prepared, visits paid, meetings attended; in addition to which requests came from outside churches which could not be entirely ignored. Nevertheless by a careful and methodical arrangement of my time I was able to devote a few hours every week to the development of my story.

Before the end of the year it was completed, and then I had to consider what use I should make of it.

Falling in with our Connexional Editor, the Rev. J. S. Withington, I suggested to him that he should run it as a serial in the Denominational Magazine. But he shook his head rather emphatically.

"It would brighten it up very considerably," I laughed.

"You think it needs brightening?"

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“Most emphatically. Most of our young people never look at it.”

“I admit it is rather solid.”

“Stodgy, you mean.”

He reflected for a moment. “Do you know,” he said, “a good brother wrote to me last week and said that the page headed ‘Recent Deaths’ was the most interesting part of the magazine, and suggested that I had more of them.”

“A very discerning brother,” I replied. “He ought to be employed to kill off a number of cantankerous saints whose departure to the better country would be a great gain to the churches.”

He laughed and took the manuscript away with him.

A few days later we met again. “I like the story immensely,” he said, “and am strongly tempted to publish it. But——”

“Yes?”

“Well, you see, from the very first number no editor has ever admitted fiction to its pages.”

“What about the obituary notices?” I questioned.

“You must be charitable,” he smiled.

“I try to be.”

“Suppose I were to publish the first few chapters,” he said, “and a storm was raised. There’s no knowing what might happen. A lot of our people are still—well, narrow—you know that?”

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"Don't I, just!"

"They might make it very difficult for me."

"They might."

"Would you consent, in the event of strong complaints, to the thing being dropped?"

"Willingly. I don't want you to get into trouble on my account."

So the matter was settled. The January number appeared with the first two chapters, and no complaint was heard. February came, and March and April. The editor began to breathe freely again. The only complaint that reached his office was that the magazine was not delivered in time. For once in its history at any rate the young people of the denomination had become interested in its contents and looked eagerly forward to its appearance.

Before the year was out I was able to send a complete set of printed slips to the publishers of "Alec Green." The reply was an offer of £20 for the copyright.

I suggested a royalty on each copy sold. This was declined. They were prepared to bring out the book in good style, bevelled boards, gilt edges, fully illustrated. This meant sinking a lot of money which they might never see back.

I had great faith in the story, and believed it would sell, but what could I do? I was young and inexperienced. I was hundreds of miles away from London. I had no knowledge of publishers or their ways. I could not afford a long journey

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to London on the off-chance of getting better terms.

On pressing for a more generous offer I was told that if by any chance the book proved a success I should not be forgotten, but should have a share of the profits. With that I had to be content. The agreement was signed, and the book published.

Its success was instantaneous. There was never a moment's doubt on that point. It sold by thousands and scores of thousands. It found its way into all parts of the world. After more than forty years it is still selling.

In reply to a reminder that if the book proved a success I should not be forgotten I received a cheque for ten pounds. That was the end of “Her Benny” as far as I am concerned.

I make no complaint. A bargain is a bargain, and when once made it is not to be set aside. Publishers are business men, not philanthropists. They have to set their gains against their losses. Messrs. F. Warne and Co. kept strictly to the letter of the agreement, and also to the letter of their promise. I do not say that the extra £10 erred on the side of generosity. Every man is out to make the best terms possible.

I may regard it as unfortunate that I did not make better terms ; I was equally unfortunate when, many years later, the firm went into liquidation, and I found myself among the creditors ; but that was after the death of the founder.

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Perhaps at this point I may be permitted to offer a word of advice to beginners.

In the first place I would say, never publish a book at your own risk. I never did this myself, but I have known a great many who have done so, and in every case with unfortunate results. If a publisher, who generally knows his business, is not prepared to take the risk, it is very unlikely that you will make a success of it.

Of course if you are prepared to pay a lot of money for the fun or the honour of seeing your name in print that is quite another matter.

In the second place don't sell your copyright, and don't forget that since the passing of the act of 1911 the word copyright covers everything, not only the book rights, but the serial rights, the dramatic rights, the translation rights and the cinema rights. In fact there seems no kind of right that it doesn't cover.

Ostensibly it was passed in the interests of the author, in reality it was passed in the interests of the publishers. Any dictionary published before 1911 will tell you that the word "copyright" means the right to publish a book, literally the right to make copies. Hence an author who published a book in 1910 may discover that the act of 1911 has robbed him of rights that he believed were indubitably his, and handed them over to the publisher.

Take the cinema rights. A few years ago the cinema was unheard of and undreamed of. Let

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us suppose that an author assigned the copyright (that is, under the old law, the right to publish a book) on a royalty basis to his publisher. Let us suppose that under a special clause he reserved to himself the serial rights, but he did not reserve the cinema rights, for the simple reason that no such rights existed. Now he wakes up perhaps to the discovery that his publisher has sold the cinema rights for a big sum and pocketed the money. And if the 1911 act is retrospective, as is contended, he has no redress whatever.

It is true that the best class of publishers refuse to take advantage of an act that appears to give them something to which they have no moral right, but that does not remedy the essential unfairness of the act or give any protection to those unfortunate authors whose publishers are not so particular.

But it may be asked: Is the 1911 act retrospective? That is a question I cannot answer. I believe it has not yet been tested in a court of law. Very few authors have any money to spend in law suits.

I have known cases, however, where the author has threatened to go to law on the question and the publisher has climbed down and in the end they have agreed to a compromise.

The position is, however, very unsatisfactory; hence I repeat my advice to young authors: “Don’t sell your copyright.” Don’t even let the word copyright creep into your agreements.

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Assign the “right to publish in book form only,” and carefully reserve all other rights that you wish to keep under your own control.

In the last place, before putting your name to any agreement get your solicitor to go through it with you clause by clause.

Of course if you employ a literary agent he will see to it that your interests are properly looked after.

CHAPTER VII

MANCHESTER

FROM Burnley I went to Manchester where (always excepting my wife) I made the dearest and most delightful friendship of my life. J. Marshall Mather was a man of my own age. He was a son of the Manse, and so naturally drifted into the ministry. He had one of the keenest intellects I have ever met, was an omnivorous reader, and had a fine taste in literature. He knew Lancashire like a book, and understood the Lancashire people, their peculiarities and idiosyncrasies, as no outsider like myself could ever hope to do. He was chock-full of stories concerning them, and could speak their dialect like a native.

Unfortunately he was a shy man, and so excessively nervous that he rarely did himself justice ; and only those who knew him intimately realized how great a man he was.

I kept urging him to put his knowledge of the Lancashire people into a book, to write a series of idylls which would portray their varied characteristics, but he was always doubtful of his ability to do anything of the kind, and expressed himself as afraid of making a hash of it.

It was not until several years later, when I

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was editing "The Family Circle," a weekly journal, published by James Clarke and Co., of Fleet Street, that I induced him to make the attempt.

We took one of our long rambles together out on the hills that hem in the Rossendale Valley, and discussed the subject in all its bearings. He was a delightful talker, and I always felt mentally braced after spending a day in his company.

The following week he sent me his first story. It was excellent in many ways, but not just what I wanted. I did not return it, however, but urged him to try again on somewhat different lines.

A fortnight later I received "Owd Enoch's Flute," and I could have shouted for joy. It was tender, quaint, and brimful of a delicious humour. I felt far more elated than if I had written it myself, and a little proud that my confidence had been justified.

For the next few years his pen was rarely still. Regularly every fortnight I received an idyll from his pen, and at the end of the year the first series was published under the title "Lancashire Idylls," and was received with marked favour both by the press and the public.

A year later the second volume was published under the title "The Sign of the Wooden Shoon," followed by a third two years later, "By Roaring Loom." Those volumes are worthy to stand

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side by side with "A Window in Thrums," and "The Bonnie Brier Bush." Mather has done for Lancashire what Barrie and Ian Maclaren have done for parts of Scotland.

That I bullied him into doing it, to quote his own expression, is a great gratification to myself, for I have an immense admiration for the virile hard-headed people who live in those smoky manufacturing towns.

Unfortunately the Lancashire dialect is not so well known throughout England as is the Scotch. Moreover it is not so musical as the quaint vernacular of Thrums. On the contrary it is slightly harsh and uncouth. For these reasons Marshall Mather's books are not so widely known as they deserve to be.

Two other volumes are to be placed to his credit, "The Life and Teaching of Ruskin," which is still used as a text book in many schools and colleges, and "A Study of English Poets."

Failing health closed too early what should have been an increasingly brilliant career. To-day "after life's fitful fever he sleeps well."

Soon after I settled in Manchester I received from the Mayor, Sir Thomas Baker, an invitation to a banquet to be given in honour of Harrison Ainsworth. I was not aware till then that the author of "The Tower of London" was a Manchester man. I had read a good many of Ains-

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worth's books including the " Lancashire Witches," and was rather curious to see the author. It was in its way a rather distinguished gathering. The magnificent banqueting hall of Manchester's most famous building was brilliantly lighted, the tables resplendent with flowers and silver and cut glass. It was the first function of the kind that I had attended, and as I knew no one I felt at first a little bit out of it.

However, the Mayor was kind and introduced me to the guest of the evening, and to Archibald Forbes who accompanied him. Other introductions followed and before the long evening was over I began to feel at home.

As I recall him Ainsworth was a little and rather wizened man who looked considerably more than his three score years and ten. He was bright and vivacious, and in his speech told us that he was still hard at work on a new novel, and that he hoped to go on writing for a good many more years, a hope, however, which he was not destined to realize.

After dinner we were joined by a number of ladies, among whom were Mrs. Linnæus Banks the author of " The Manchester Man," a book that had a considerable vogue in its day, and Miss Jessie Fothergill, the author of " The First Violin," and one or two rather popular novels.

My recollection of Mrs. Banks is that of a delightful old lady, quaint, bright-eyed, wrinkled, and full of vivacity and charm. Miss Fothergill

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had become slightly famous, and appeared to be fully aware of that fact.

Dear old Edwin Waugh, the Lancashire poet, was as keen and humorous as one expected him to be. Of the other notabilities I have but the faintest recollection.

One of Manchester's great days in the estimation of many people was the yearly meeting of the United Kingdom Alliance. The day always closed with an enormous gathering in the Free Trade Hall. Sir Wilfrid Lawson invariably occupied the chair. Sam Pope, K.C. (then Q.C.), who was, I think, honorary counsel to the alliance, always sat on his left. He was a weighty speaker in more senses than one, for he tipped the scale at eighteen stone. On Sir Wilfrid's right sat the invited speaker, and beyond him was J. H. Raper, the secretary, and one of the most brilliant platform speakers I have ever listened to. I remember the order well, for I was the invited speaker on more than one occasion.

The influence of this vast meeting would be felt in every part of the city. In this respect provincial towns and cities have a great advantage over London. London can only be touched in all its parts by a big demonstration in Hyde Park, and even then large blocks of it will remain undisturbed. Moreover a Hyde Park demonstration is never entirely satisfactory. You get fifteen or twenty groups of people gathered round

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as many platforms, and people rush from group to group so as to hear as many speakers as possible. Ineffective speakers may be left shouting into empty space, while a popular speaker may find a crowd extending beyond the reach of his voice.

I have spoken on several occasions at such demonstrations, and never with entire satisfaction to myself, and I am afraid with not much satisfaction to those who listened.

A meeting in the Free Trade Hall is of an entirely different order. The platform is given a chance. With the vast auditorium crowded with thousands of people an atmosphere is produced that is electrical. The speaker is bound to feel it and if he has anything in him he rises almost unconsciously to the occasion. Sir Wilfrid and Pope and Raper were always at their best at these annual meetings.

There is a story told of Pope that is worth repeating. He was a son of Dr. Pope, a rather celebrated Wesleyan minister. When Pope was a young man and preparing for the Bar, he occasionally tried his 'prentice hand at preaching in the smaller chapels.

One Sunday morning at breakfast his father said to him: "Sam, I'm not feeling at all well to-day. You will have to preach for me this morning."

"But, father, I can't," Sam protested.

"You can, and you must," replied his father.

"But I have no sermon," Sam complained.

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"Then you must prepare one," was the reply. "You have two hours in which to do it, and if you can't make a sermon in two hours you are a poor stick indeed, and not fit to be a barrister. Now be off to my study, and don't say another word."

So Sam retired to his father's study, and remained there till service time.

The chapel was almost next door. A few minutes after Sam had taken his departure the doctor put on his hat and followed. He crept into the chapel and found a seat behind the pulpit where Sam could not see him, and remained there during the sermon.

When Sam returned his father was waiting for him.

"Well, Sam," was the old man's greeting, "I've been to chapel, and I've heard you preach."

"What!" exclaimed Sam aghast.

"Yes, I've heard you," continued the old man. "And a wretchedly poor fist you made of it. I really am a bit ashamed of you, Sam. I thought you could do better."

"You think the sermon was not very good?" Sam questioned.

"Good?" the old man sneered. "I think it was one of the worst sermons I ever listened to."

"Well, father," Sam said, "I thought it was a very poor sermon myself, but I turned over a big pile in your study, and it was the best I could find!"

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In this connexion I may be permitted to tell another preaching story. As in the case of Dr. Pope the old clergyman was anxious to hear his son (who was being trained for the ministry) try his hand at preaching. The son was down from college during the summer vacation, and the father thought he was not likely to have a better chance of discovering how his son was shaping for the ministry. He was not a brilliant youth, and college had not improved him. He had begun to put on airs and graces and cultivate what he believed was the correct Oxford drawl.

The occasion was an anniversary of some kind, and the arrangement was that the son should preach morning and afternoon and the father at night. The son was quite prepared to take the lion's share and to show his father how to do it.

In the morning, after sundry posturings, he announced his text: "He that hath yahs to yah let him yah." In the afternoon his text was "Now Bawabbas was a wobbah!"

At night came on the old man and took for his text: "Lord have mercy on my son for he is a lunatic and sore tormented."

Sir Wilfrid Lawson was a prince of story-tellers. He seemed to have an inexhaustible supply, and he told them with infinite gusto. We always expected a few fresh stories when he appeared on the platform at the annual meeting of the Alliance, and we were never disappointed.

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I remember dining with him on one occasion at Gawthorpe Hall, the residence of Sir Ughtred Kay-Shuttleworth — afterwards Lord Shuttleworth. Sir Wilfrid was in his best form, and if we enjoyed listening to his stories, I am quite sure he enjoyed equally well telling them.

I recall one of his stories which I will set down here. We had been talking of the ignorance that prevailed in certain working-class districts, of the peril to the next generation in girls being allowed to go so early to the mills, and the need of some measure of training in domestic economy.

Sir Wilfrid told of a district visitor who went to see a woman whose baby was ill. It was quite evident that she was feeding it with the wrong kind of food. The visitor took her to task, pointed out the danger and began to instruct her in the art, or in the science of rearing children.

The woman listened for some time in silence ; then she turned upon her visitor indignantly. " Thee get oot," she said. " Dost think thou can taich me how to raise childer. I've buried seven, and I ought to know."

During my first winter in Manchester I was brought into touch with the operations of the Manchester City Mission, and became profoundly interested. Here was an organization that reached out helping hands in all directions, that undertook what I will call redemptive work beyond anything the churches attempted to do, that went straight

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for the outcast and the fallen, that followed the lost sheep that had strayed into the desert and had got entangled in the thickets of sin and despair.

The churches look after the saints with commendable zeal, and feed them regularly with the milk and honey of the Word. They provide comfortable pews for the respectable and well-to-do, and furnish a fairly attractive programme of music and eloquence for those who can afford to pay for such entertainment. In days gone by they used to provide a number of "free seats" for the indigent and the poor, but in most churches to-day that custom has disappeared.

Beyond this, however, organized Christianity, as represented by the churches, seems unable to do much. Most churches have as much as they can do to keep the machinery in working condition. The doors are wide open Sunday morning and evening, and the outcasts are invited to come in, but nobody expects them to do so; that is the tragedy of it. Many of the wealthier churches provide mission halls in the poorer districts, but for some reason this does not meet the case.

The lost sheep have to be followed if they are to be found. They have to be sought out if they are to be brought back.

This was what the City Mission was attempting to do. I was greatly impressed with its effort at rescue work. At stated intervals bands of men paraded the streets between ten o'clock and midnight, their pockets full of cards of invitation

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to a supper of hot cocoa and coffee, buns and sandwiches. This supper was generally provided in the Friends' Meeting House in Mount Street.

The city was divided into districts, and the men went in pairs. It is long ago now but I carry with me a vivid picture of my first experience. It was a bitterly cold night in January, with a snarling north-east wind, and occasional swirls of powdered snow that stung one's cheek like whipcord. Market Street was our district from Deansgate to the Infirmary. The shops were all closed, but the sidewalks were still fairly crowded. My companion was soon busy giving out cards of invitation ; I looked on in amazement. I was new to the work, a comparative stranger to the city, and I should never have recognized these women as being what they were.

Some of them were mere girls, and all too thinly clad for such a bitter night. A few were brazen and defiant, and truculently refused the cards of invitation, but for the most part they accepted, many of them gratefully, others with a reservation. They would come if——.

By 11.30 we had given away all our cards, and when we reached Mount Street the Meeting House was already half full, and there was pouring into it a steady stream of the lost and strayed. By midnight the place was full. I calculated that about six hundred would be present. The proceedings began with " Grace " sung to the accompaniment of a harmonium. It was pathetic to

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hear them sing, and they sang the words with great feeling :

Thy mercies bless, and grant that we
May feast in Paradise with Thee.

Then we all got busy taking round trays of buns and sandwiches, and cups of hot coffee and cocoa. Some of them ate ravenously, and all appeared to enjoy the good cheer, which was not to be wondered at after the bitter cold outside.

Then followed what may be termed a sing-song. There was no preaching, no exhortation, no fault-finding, no rebuke. A brief address of welcome was given, then an offer of aid. Some of them might like to go back home, and at the word home many of the girls burst into tears. Some of them might like to go into a house of refuge where they could be trained for work and service of various kinds. Any who so desired, if they would remain behind after the close of the meeting, would get the help they needed.

The hymns provided all the preaching that seemed necessary. No doubt was left on my mind as to the upbringing of most of the girls. They knew the hymns as well as I did, and they sang them with a depth of feeling that could not be surpassed in any church. "Rock of Ages, cleft for me," moved them profoundly. Scores of them sang with closed eyes, and the tears running down their faces. Many of them choked and sat down, hiding their faces in their hands.

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There were not many dry eyes on the platform. At the close of the meeting some forty or fifty of the girls remained behind. Three or four of them hailed from Burnley. One of them told me she had been a scholar in the Brunswick Sunday School. Others came from such towns as Rochdale, Bacup, Bury and Accrington. Love of finery, the hatred of mill work, the lure of a big city, and the treachery of male acquaintances had been the chief factors in their fall.

Next day about twenty of them were restored to their homes, and others were taken care of in the Mission's Refuge. If only one girl was rescued it was worth all the labour and expense.

The three great preachers in Manchester during the time of my residence there were Dr. Alexander Maclaren, Dr. Macfadyen, and Marmaduke Miller, very different types of men, but all remarkable in their way. Maclaren was a preacher *par excellence*. I doubt if he had any peer in his own generation. I met him occasionally at meetings and fraternal, but never got to know him intimately. He seemed a diffident man, and rather chary of opening his arms to strangers. Macfadyen was a bluffer and heartier type. Miller was one of the choicest spirits I have ever known, and withal a great preacher in the fullest sense of the word.

Curiously, it was in Manchester I got better acquainted with my brother Joe than ever before.

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When I left home he was only a lad of some nine or ten years of age. I saw him but once a year at most, when I went home for a fortnight's holiday. Now he turned up a young man of twenty-one, and was entered as a theological student at Victoria Park College, with the privilege of attending Owens College for the Arts Course. I met him on his arrival, and took him to my house, and we had a long and what the Americans call heart-to-heart talk. After that I saw him frequently, for he could always come to see me when he had a few hours to spare. I was soon convinced that whatever else they might make of him, they would never run him out into any stereotyped mould. He was not of sufficiently malleable stuff to be licked into any orthodox shape. For good or ill he would be himself and never a pale copy of anyone else.

So it has proved. He has since won national fame as a preacher and lecturer, while his books have proved sufficiently popular to satisfy (I fancy) even himself.

It was during our stay in Manchester that my wife and I paid our first visit to Switzerland. I had previously indulged in a short trip to Holland and Belgium, but up to now Switzerland was a country I had only seen in pictures and in dreams. I suppose first impressions are always most vivid and enduring. Certainly I shall never forget my first glimpse of the snow moun-

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tains and the thrill that ran through me like an electric shock.

We had arrived in Lucerne late in the evening and it was too dark to see anything except the reflection of the lamps and the stars in the still waters of the lake. We were fortunate in having a front room at the Swan Hotel, which stands at the end of the lake, just over the bridge.

We slept late, for we were both tired after our long journey. But when at length I pulled open the window, drew up the Venetian blind, and stepped out on the balcony, I stood aghast for several moments, overwhelmed with the magnificence of the view. It was so vast, so unexpectedly glorious that my brain seemed incapable of taking it in.

I fetched out a chair at length and sat down, and tried to familiarize myself with the details. The blue-green waters of the lake, stretching away and away into the purple distance, flanked by the green slopes of the Rigi and the Burgenstock, and beyond, and towering above all, the vast fields of snow, rising tier above tier, and peak above peak into the tender blue of the sky.

I have visited Switzerland a dozen times since then, and tramped over most of its passes, explored nearly all its famous places, seen it under all conditions of sunshine and storm, and yet that first view remains the most vivid and unforgettable.

CHAPTER VIII

THE OLD AND THE NEW

I LEFT Manchester after three years for what seemed to me quite sufficient reasons. In the first place I wanted a pastorate rather than a circuit. I disliked the arrangement by which one was scarcely ever in the same pulpit two full Sundays in succession. It gave one no chance of pursuing a definite line of teaching.

For the most part my colleagues had been older men than myself, in some cases much older. We had been trained in different schools of thought, had learned to look at the whole scheme of things from different standpoints. Hence unwittingly we seemed at times to negative each other's teaching. This may have been interesting and stimulating to the congregations, but to me it seemed largely a waste of effort.

In the second place I disliked the itinerant system. In twelve years I had been in five circuits, and I objected to having my life broken up into bits in this way. It is true that among the United Methodists a "full-connexion" minister was not compelled to leave at the end of three years, although three years was still the rule. The tradition remained, and was deeply

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rooted both in ministers and circuits. On the whole—especially in country districts—it worked well. A great many ministers had exhausted their stock of sermons by the time they had completed their three years, and in some instances had exhausted their circuits as well. There was a saying that circuits regarded their minister in the first year with admiration, in the second with toleration, and in the third with detestation. That no doubt was stating the matter in extreme terms. Nevertheless in a great many instances both circuits and ministers are kept everlastingly on the *qui vive*, each hoping that the next change will be an improvement on the last.

Anyhow I disliked the itinerant system intensely. It was a temptation to mental laziness, and might easily end in mental stagnation. If one has a sermon that will fit the occasion why go to the trouble of making a new one? That temptation faced me constantly, as I have no doubt it has faced other ministers. So I looked round for a means of escape. I wanted a "single church" circuit where I could preach every Sunday in the same pulpit, where I could settle down for an indefinite period and where I could pursue a clear and definite line of thought.

In the third place Manchester did not suit my health. I was never really well all the time I was there. Hence it seemed imperative that if I was to live my life in my own way, or even live

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at all I must seek some other sphere, perhaps get out of the ministry altogether.

As it happened Southport offered me my opportunity. A new chapel had been recently built in Duke Street, to take the place of an old one in Lord Street. It was a rather handsome structure with seating accommodation for eight hundred people.

That the congregation averaged about eighty people, or on a special occasion from one hundred to one hundred and twenty, did not worry me. I felt it would be an advantage to begin and build from the bottom. I was not aware, however, that the chapel was so completely waterlogged with debt or I might have reconsidered my decision. It appeared, when the trustees came to sell the old chapel, from which they expected to net several thousand pounds, that, through some flaw in the lease or some clause they had overlooked, the property was not theirs to sell. It had reverted to the ground landlord.

Hence I found a chapel mortgaged to the hilt, and with an income from pew-rents quite insufficient to pay the interest. What would have happened if the finances had not taken a turn for the better one can only guess.

Of my ministry during the thirteen years I was there I do not propose to say much. Before accepting the invitation I had stipulated that I should have a free hand. This was readily granted. The church was in such a hopeless

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condition that it could scarcely be worse. My preaching did not please a few of the older members, and they took their departure prophesying complete disaster.

By placing a seat against the walls all round the gallery the seating accommodation was increased by about a hundred, and by placing chairs in the aisles and in front of the communion rails another fifty or sixty could be accommodated. So that we were able to reckon on some nine hundred and fifty people.

During the years that followed, the church doubled my salary, wiped out a big overdraft at the bank, for which two of the trustees had made themselves responsible, cleared off every penny of debt from the building, re-decorated it throughout, installed a new heating apparatus, and filled the organ loft with a very fine instrument.

When, at length after thirteen years of fairly strenuous work I retired from the ministry, Duke Street, Southport, was looked upon as the plum of the denomination. There was no other church that paid its minister so well or that held a more commanding position.

That these things alone amounted to success I am very far from asserting. To draw a continuous crowd through a long stretch of years and fill the coffers of the church with gold may mean very little in any true estimate of the value of one's ministry. Moral and spiritual results, which after all are the only things that matter, are

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not easily tabulated, and I had no means of judging how far my ministry was successful in these respects.

Southport is a fashionable watering-place. People come to it from all parts of the country, particularly from the busy centres of Lancashire and Yorkshire. My books were selling by tens of thousands. My name had got into the Press as a preacher and lecturer. People discussed me in hotels and hydros and boarding-houses. In busy seasons we had to turn people in crowds from the door. They came in many instances, I have no doubt, out of curiosity. Those who got in listened critically or sympathetically just as they were in the mood. How far I helped them or hindered them I cannot judge. Some were pleased I know, others, I feel sure, were disappointed; but the measure of my success or failure must be left to the judgment of Heaven.

My first long holiday after settling in Southport was spent in the United States and Canada. The British Association, of which I was a member, was holding its Annual Meeting in Montreal, and as all the steamship companies were granting special facilities, and a number of people I knew were making the trip, it seemed to me a good opportunity of carrying into effect what I had long desired.

The Atlantic liners were not then as big or as luxurious as they have since become, nor had

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they attained the speed at which they travel to-day. We were eight days in crossing from Liverpool to New York, thirty hours beyond schedule time, but this was in consequence of a breakdown of one of the engines when we were almost within sight of the American coast.

We were on the whole a cheerful and even merry company, and except for a brief spell after leaving Queenstown I enjoyed the trip across. At our table sat a number of old travellers, who could be relied on for a good story at the shortest notice.

One story I still remember. A missionary, after spending several years in India, was returning to the States. The first day at dinner he fetched a bottle of chutney from his state room and helped himself freely during the joint course.

An American who sat next to him eyed this (to him) new kind of sauce with considerable curiosity. At length his curiosity getting the better of him he remarked casually :

“ I guess that is a noo kind of condiment you are using ? ”

“ It's chutney,” replied the missionary.

“ The name is not familiar to me,” the American remarked. “ I presoom it's a special appetiser ? ”

“ Well, I don't know,” the missionary smiled. “ It's a matter of taste, I expect. I have lived a good many years in India and I have got to like it. Would you like to sample it yourself ? ”

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"Wall, as I'm always interested in noo things, I just should," the American replied.

"It's fairly warm," the missionary remarked, and passed him the bottle.

The American helped himself liberally ; but after the first considerable consignment had passed within his lips he did not speak again for some time. He seemed overwhelmed by some great emotion ; his lips quivered, indeed his whole face was convulsed, and tears ran in streams down his cheeks.

When at length he had recovered himself and was able to speak again he turned a reproachful face on the missionary.

"You say you are a missionary ? " he inquired pathetically.

"That is so," was the reply.

"And you no doubt believe in Hell fire ? "

"I do."

"No doubt you do ; but I'm blamed if you are not the first missionary I ever heard of who took samples round with him."

The first thing that struck me about New York was its foreign appearance, and, if I may say so, its foreign atmosphere, and while I remained in it I was never able to get away from that feeling. Boston on the other hand might have passed for a typical English city. I felt at home in Boston but never in New York.

On my way to Montreal I spent a day or two

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at Saratoga where I saw more powdered faces to the square yard, and a greater display of jewellery than I had ever encountered before.

I arrived in Montreal just in time for the public reception given to the British delegates of the B.A. Then followed a round of meetings and receptions and garden parties and luncheons and ice-cream suppers, and excursions to various places, including a sail down the Lachine Rapids. Indeed the latter became quite a favourite pastime.

A delightful trip to Quebec stands out very clearly in my memory. A garden party in the afternoon was followed by a reception and dance at night in the Citadel. We returned as we came, by water. The only thing I remember about our journey back is that I was called upon to make an after-dinner speech in reply to some toast, the nature of which I have forgotten.

Montreal, as most people know, stands at the foot of Mount Royal, and from the top of this considerable eminence very fine views are to be obtained in all directions. On the occasion of my visit a man who was guarding a telescope was exceedingly solicitous that I should venture "a quarter" (25 cents), and get "the finest view in the universe."

I ventured to suggest to him with all modesty that that was rather "a tall order."

"I grant it, stranger," he said, "and this is a tall mountain, the tallest there is this side of the Rockies, and the view you can get through this

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telescope can't be compared with anything else on this planet. It shows creation on its grandest scale. Why, do you see that church steeple out there, miles and miles away?" and he pointed in the direction in which he wished me to look.

"Yes, I see the steeple," I answered.

"And the clock?" he questioned.

"I am not so sure," I replied.

"Well, anyhow, stranger," he said. "There is a clock in that steeple, and if you will look through this glass it'll bring that 'ar clock so near that you can hear it strike."

After that what could I do but lighten my purse to the extent of a quarter?

I arrived in Toronto about midnight, after an exhausting railway journey, hot, tired, and dusty beyond description. The first necessity was a bath, after which I got into bed, and somewhere in the small hours fell asleep. It seemed that I had scarcely closed my eyes when I was startled by a loud rat-tat-tat on my door.

"Yes?" I called sleepily.

"May I come in?" a voice answered, and at the same time there was an attempt to open the door.

"No, you can't," I answered. "Who are you?"

"I represent *The Toronto* ——" something or other. "I want to interview you for my paper."

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"Sorry you have taken so much trouble," I replied. "I've nothing to report."

"But you are speaking in —— Street Methodist Church to-morrow night."

"I believe so, but you need not have come here to tell me that."

"I didn't. What do you think of Canada?"

"It seems immense," I replied.

"And the people?" he bawled.

"Fine Good morning."

"Oh, but——"

"I'm too sleepy to talk," I pleaded. "Just go away, please."

"But I want——"

"Some other time," I interrupted. "You ought to have some mercy for a stranger."

He went away at length, and I fell asleep again. That evening in the smoking-room I picked up a paper and the first thing on which my eyes rested was a column headed in big type—

SILAS K. HOCKING

WORLD-RENOWNED PREACHER,

LECTURER AND AUTHOR

FIRST VISIT TO CANADA

SPECIAL INTERVIEW

Then followed some fifteen hundred words of letterpress with a number of cross headings. I am not given to blushing, and I do not claim

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more than an average amount of modesty, but I am quite sure I blushed whilst reading that article. The reporter might have resented my refusal to be interviewed, but evidently he did not. Perhaps he was used to being treated cavalierly, and regarded it all in the day's work ; or it might be that his article was a subtle form of irony which I had not wit enough to see. Anyhow, taking it at its face value, I found myself described as a person of far greater importance than I had ever dreamed of being, possessing gifts of eloquence, etc., which, alas ! had entirely passed me by, and rejoicing in a popularity which I had never known and never shall know.

If the considerable crowd which came to hear me on the following evening were drawn together by that newspaper article they must have gone away woefully disappointed, for no ordinary man could possibly have lived up to such a reputation.

The night was one of the hottest I have ever known. The male part of the audience, almost without exception, wore duck jackets, the women were in flimsy white, and everybody was provided with a fan which was used incessantly from the beginning to the end of the meeting. Anything more distracting from the speaker's point of view could not easily be imagined. At the close I felt like a piece of chewed string, and was glad to get back to my hotel and indulge in

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the luxury of a lemon squash with a big piece of ice in it.

I had been provided, through the courtesy of the Canadian Pacific Railway Company, with a pass which would take me to the Rocky Mountains and back, and for a few days I remained undecided whether or not to make the trip. But with a thermometer nearing 90° in the shade, and showing no sign of falling, I concluded at length that the pleasure of seeing the Rockies would be too dearly bought.

Of course I went to see the Falls of Niagara, and viewed them from both the American and Canadian sides. I stood on the Rock of Ages at the foot of the Falls, and, clad in oilskins, went into the Cave of the Winds behind the Cataract, and watched from above the mighty mass of waters struggle and recoil, and then take their leap, and from the slope below the Clifton Hotel listened to the roar. That to me was the most wonderful of all. After listening for awhile one caught the deep undertone—not so much heard as felt—that came pulsing up from seemingly immeasurable depths. I could not help wondering how many octaves it might be below the lowest organ note that was ever produced. Once I had caught that deep and mighty undertone I could hear nothing else; it dominated everything, and hushed to silence every other sound.

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To sail out on the great lake until land had disappeared from sight helped one to realize in some measure the bigness of those inland seas.

Indeed what impressed me most was the bigness of things, the immense distances one had to cover in going from place to place, the vastness of the country, the gigantic proportions of its rivers, and lakes and forests and plains.

And there was beauty as well as bigness. Sailing across the Lake of the Thousand Isles was an experience I shall never forget. I believe there are about fifteen hundred islands all told, and on nearly every island there is a house, on some of them more than one—the summer residences of the rich. And delightful places they looked, all built of yellow wood, and in all styles of architecture, some of exquisite design and richly carved, some on simpler lines; here a miniature French chateau, and there a Swiss chalet. And everywhere trees and shrubs and flowers in great profusion, and a tiny rowing-boat rocking at every garden gate.

I suppose there is nothing else like it in any part of the world. We seemed to sail for hours among those beautiful islands. People hailed us from balconies and doorways, children shouted from lawns and gardens, dogs challenged each other across the still waters.

I almost envied some of those millionaires. I could not imagine a more delightful summer retreat. Shade of trees, fragrance of flowers,

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music of lapping waters, no noise of traffic, no dust of streets, no shrieking of railway trains, no clanging of bells, no hooting of motor horns ; just sylvan peace where one might read and think and dream.

From Canada I made my way into New England, to Vermont, and Maine, and Massachusetts. Two pleasant days I spent in Boston. From thence I went to Cornwall on the Hudson, where I spent two or three delightful days with Dr. Lyman Abbott. E. P. Roe, the story-writer, was a neighbour of his, and dropped in of an evening for a chat. One morning Miss Roe took me for a drive in their buggy, a lightly sprung machine on high wheels. I had to admit that the scenery was beautiful, but the roads were atrocious. I was almost afraid that my teeth would be jolted out before we got back.

The President of Columbia University—I have forgotten his name—came to see us, and we discussed English politics, and free trade, and the presidential election, which was then afoot, and books and novelists, American and British, and preachers and theology.

Dr. Abbott knew England well, and was acquainted with a large circle of English people. His talk was always illuminating. A great thinker, a great preacher, and a great editor. As a host no one could be more delightful. His house seemed to be a rendezvous for distinguished Americans.

It was suggested that I should accept an

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honorary D.D. from one of the universities, a distinction which I respectfully declined.

"I have no more use for a D.D.," I said; "than a frog has for pockets," a Cornish simile which provoked a good deal of laughter.

"The English pulpit is already overweighted with American D.D.s," I told them; and they admitted that the traffic in cheap honours by obscure universities had become something of a scandal.

Since those days the scandal has considerably increased. I have known several D.D.s who had scarcely an aitch to their names.

After a brief visit to Philadelphia and Washington, I returned to New York and went aboard the *Arizona* the same evening; and early next morning we set sail for home.

It was now late in September, and the equinoctial gales accompanied us all the way across. For five nights in succession my cabin steward stuck a mattress in front of me to keep me from rolling out. In the dining saloon the "fiddles" were never taken off the tables. To play any kind of game on deck was almost an impossibility. Day after day and night after night we rolled and rolled and rolled, so that when at length I found myself on the landing stage at Liverpool I had the greatest difficulty in walking without a lurch.

CHAPTER IX

SOME PREACHERS

MARK TWAIN declared that it would be impossible to fling a stone anywhere in Montreal without smashing a church window. Almost the same may be said of Southport. The Wesleyans have a number of particularly fine churches, but as they kept rigidly to the three years system in my time their ministers came and went and I saw very little of them. Able men, most of them, but before they had time to make any impression on the town they departed to some other sphere. W. J. Dawson was the only one with whom I became intimate. Mr. Dawson had already won distinction as a writer. His novel, "The Redemption of Edward Strachan," showed considerable promise, but I think he felt that fiction was not his *métier*, and he turned his attention to poetry, and to literary criticism. His "Makers of Modern English" not only had a large sale but won high praise from the critics. This was followed by "Makers of Modern Poetry," a book of equal value to the student. For many years now he has resided in America. I do not know if he is still writing, but his son Coningsby, whom I knew as a lad, has, during the last few

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years, won very considerable distinction as a novelist.

Distinguished Wesleyan ministers frequently came to Southport for special services. It was during one of his visits that I first made the acquaintance of Mark Guy Pearse. He was then in his prime, and immensely popular throughout the country as a preacher and lecturer. A Cornishman himself, he knew the Cornish people inside and out, and could tell Cornish stories by the hour, tell them in the vernacular, and with that curious lilt and intonation which are specialities of the Delectable Duchy.

During a visit to the far west of Canada, "Mark Guy" visited a mining camp to which a number of Cornish miners had emigrated, and in the largest hall in the place gave his lecture on "The Old Folks at Home." The Cornish people, of course, were delighted. It was like being at home again to hear stories of the old county told in the quaint vernacular, and with faultless intonation.

At the close of the lecture a Cornishman came up to him with shining face and misty eyes, and shook him heartily by the hand.

"Lor, Maaster Pearse," he said, "it's like being down to home again to hear 'ee spaik, and I've been wondering all the while how you do do it. You bain't livin' in Cornwall be 'ee when you be to home?"

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“ Oh, no, I live in London.”

“ Well, now, there ’tes. An’ yet you do remember everything ’zactly like they used to was. All they curious words, and all they funny little turns. Lor, how I ded laugh. I caan’t think how tes you ain’t forgotten ’em oall. Why, Maaster Pearse, I hadn’t been out in this country six months before I’d forgot every bit of my Cornish.”

Several of “ Mark Guy’s ” stories have found their way into print, the best known and the most popular being “ Dan’l Quorn,” the tale of a Cornish shoemaker. On the corner of the book is a picture of Dan’l sitting at his work, lapstone on his knees, hammer upraised, his hair standing up like bristles, and a patch covering his blind eye.

Pearse was once preaching in a country town when he received a very pressing request to visit an old lady who was an invalid. She had read “ Dan’l Quorn ” and was tremendously anxious to see the author. Mr. Pearse went. When he entered the room, a typical parson, faultlessly dressed, his bald head shining, clean shaven mouth, and chin, and neat mutton-chop whiskers, the old lady lifted her hands in astonishment, and a look of intense disappointment swept over her face. Then she picked up “ Dan’l Quorn ” lying on the table, and looked at the picture on the cover, then again at Mr. Pearse.

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" Oh, dear," she said fretfully. " You're not a bit like your portrait."

One other story I must tell which Pearse does not tell himself. Perhaps it is not true, so I give it for what it is worth.

The story goes that he was preaching and lecturing in a small town in Cornwall. At the afternoon service the chapel was packed out, crowds of people who had come from a considerable distance being unable to gain admission.

Between the afternoon's sermon and the evening lecture a public tea was provided in the school-room. Mr. Pearse, however, had his tea quietly by himself in the minister's vestry.

Scarcely had he finished his tea when two of the stewards entered.

" Mr. Pearse," said the spokesman of the pair. " We be come to lay before 'ee a plan for raisin' heaps more money."

" Yes? " Mr. Pearse questioned.

" Well you know that, though they was settin' sideways in chapel this afternoon, haaf of the people couldn't get in, and they be terrible disappointed. Lots of 'em caan't stay to the lecture to-night, and crowds more waan't be able to get inside, an' some of 'em 'ave been talkin' to we about it."

" Well? "

" Well, it's just this way, Mr. Pearse. Oall these people be terrible anxious to see 'ee, and

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Brother Buddle and me 'ave been puttin' our 'eads together, and us 'ave 'it upon a plan that'll please everybody and raise a lot of money to boot."

" And what is your plan, David ? "

" Well, it's just this, Mr. Pearse. You just set 'ere in your chair in the vestry. You don't need to do nothin' but just look pleased. And us'll just let the people in ten or twelve at a time to look at 'ee, an' charge 'em sixpence each. Don't 'ee see ? "

Needless to say, much to the steward's disappointment, the plan was not carried out.

Peter Mackenzie, whom I met frequently, was a man of entirely different type. In his young days he had worked in a coal mine, and he never quite outgrew his early training. At college his tutors did their best to shape him after the orthodox pattern, but without much success. They recognized his ability, his industry, his originality, but nothing could induce him to move along conventional lines. His humour was irrepressible, his good temper unfailing. Heavy in build, awkward in his gait, and utterly indifferent as to his personal appearance, he was something of a trial to the more strait-laced of his clerical brethren. The common people heard him gladly, and came in crowds to listen to his sermons and lectures, but the ultra-refined gave him a wide berth.

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I heard him preach on several occasions, and always with pleasure and profit. His sermons were original, and showed extensive reading and careful preparation. He could no more avoid humour in the pulpit than he could avoid being Peter Mackenzie. His smile was contagious, and some of his asides unforgettable.

On one of my visits to the Potteries I was told of a practical joke that was played on Peter and his host. Peter was a great smoker, and the gentleman who had expressed a keen desire to entertain him during his visit was also a great lover of the fragrant weed.

Said the official who arranged hospitality: "You can entertain Mr. Mackenzie, but you must be exceedingly careful not to smoke in his presence."

This was something of a damper to the would-be host, but he promised nevertheless not to offend.

On his arrival Peter was met at the station by the hospitality official.

"I am taking you to the house of Mr. Blank," said the official. "You will have every comfort and every attention. It is a beautiful home with only one little drawback. You mustn't smoke."

"Oh, dear!" Peter gasped. From Saturday evening to Monday morning seemed a long time to be deprived of his beloved briar, but he resolved to make the best of it.

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His host received him with great cordiality, conducted him to his bedroom, a luxurious apartment, showed him his library and pictures, discussed the weather and other topics over an excellent dinner, and then they sat down one on each side of the fireplace to pass the interim till bed-time.

They did their best to entertain each other, but for some reason conversation hung fire. Peter wanted his pipe, and wanted it all the more because he could not have it. His host felt in a like predicament. A whiff of tobacco would have unloosened their tongues. Both felt depressed, not to say unhappy.

Peter fidgeted in his chair and stifled several yawns, and finally on the plea of feeling tired went off to bed.

The next day passed, and evening came again. His day's work done, Peter wanted his pipe more than ever. His host thought of his carefully hidden smoker's cabinet and sighed. Conversation dragged more heavily than during the previous evening. There seemed to be nothing really worth talking about.

Peter retired early to his room and bolted the door. Then he got out his pipe and filled it. It was not a bit of use, he could not endure another night without a whiff of tobacco. Throwing up the window he sat on the sill and blew clouds of smoke into the darkness.

Downstairs his host, taking advantage of

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Peter's early departure, got out a churchwarden and smoked comfortably by the fire.

When Peter got downstairs next morning the first thing he noticed was this same clay pipe standing in a corner of the fireplace, between the grate and the mantelpiece. Instantly he turned and faced his host. "Do you smoke?" he questioned.

Mr. Blank admitted a little shamefacedly that he did indulge occasionally.

"Then why in the name of Methuselah," said Peter, "did you not tell me so?"

"But I was given to understand that you strongly objected to smoking."

"Object? Oh, my ancestors! And I understood that you hated it."

For a while they looked at each other in silence. Then they both laughed.

"Look here," said Peter. "The next time I come to the Potteries I'll stay here again, and between us we'll smoke the place black!"

On one occasion Peter was announced to give a lecture on "Job." The hall was packed as usual. The chairman, anxious no doubt to prove himself worthy of the honour, made a careful study of the book of Job beforehand. Before calling upon Peter he proceeded to deliver the address he had prepared, that is he talked about Job. He told the whole story from beginning to end, and it took him over thirty minutes to tell

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it. Peter almost writhed in his chair. When at length the chairman called upon him to deliver his lecture he sprang to his feet with unusual alacrity.

“ Mr. Chairman,” he said, “ you have been kind enough to tell the audience all that it is necessary for them to know about the patriarch Job. I will not therefore inflict upon them a second lecture on the same subject. I will therefore with your permission give them a lecture on ‘ Elisha the Tishbite.’ ”

And he did !

Most public speakers have suffered from time to time at the hands of their chairman. I remember a painful experience I had in Yorkshire.

I was announced to lecture on “ Haunted Houses,” and the Town Hall had been hired for the occasion. The Mayor had consented to take the chair, and he appeared on the platform in his chain of office. He was a fussy man, bubbling over with importance.

He talked for twenty minutes about old houses in the neighbourhood that had the reputation of being haunted. Ghosts prowled through them at certain seasons. The swish of dresses was heard, sometimes the clanking of chains ; sometimes blood-curdling shrieks awoke the sleeping echoes. He had no doubt the lecturer would refer to other haunted houses in different parts of the country and give details, etc. etc.

I had to explain of course that I had not come

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to talk about ghosts and spooks and apparitions ; that I aimed at something much more practical. And I went on to talk about houses that were haunted by the demons of Drink and Dirt and Debt and Doubt.

When I had finished the chairman rose in high dudgeon. He felt bound to protest. The audience had been drawn together on false pretences. No lecturer had the right to announce one subject and speak on another. Yorkshire people resented being made fools of—

At this point some of the audience began to hiss. I fancy he thought the hisses were aimed at me.

His voice rose to a higher pitch. He wished to protest in the strongest terms against such treatment. As Mayor of that important borough he would not have consented to take the chair had he known. He considered—

But what he considered the audience refused to hear. For a few minutes a mild bedlam reigned, during which his worship left the platform. The episode to me was extremely painful. Fortunately it was the first and last of its kind. I have had many prosy and long-winded chairmen since, but never one who lost his temper.

Perhaps the wittiest and most humorous minister methodism has produced during the last half century is Dr. W. L. Watkinson. I

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believe he is still alive, though far advanced in years.

Peter Mackenzie had humour in abundance, but his humour was broad, elementary, and a little rough. Watkinson's humour was subtle and polished. It caught you unawares, and played round you gently like a summer breeze.

I first met Watkinson in Huddersfield, the occasion being a united Sunday-school Demonstration in the Town Hall. The building was crowded, and the audience as receptive and enthusiastic as a Yorkshire audience knows how to be.

I spoke for about half an hour, and then Watkinson rose, tall, gaunt, and apparently impassive. For the first few minutes he spoke with extreme deliberation, as if feeling his way. Then gradually he began to scintillate, his subtle humour came gently into play, his wit flashed like sparks from an anvil. Epigram followed epigram in rapid succession with here and there sustained passages of great beauty. I did not wonder after that at his great popularity.

There is a story told that on one occasion his hostess gently took him to task for coming down so late to breakfast.

"I am surprised at you, Mr. Watkinson," she said. "John Wesley used to get up every morning at four o'clock."

"Yes, madam," he replied with his slow smile

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and his inimitable sniff. "And if I had John Wesley's wife I should get up at three."

During my ministry at Southport Dr. Parker came there to conduct a week's mission. I had met him once previously in his vestry at the City Temple. That meeting was largely accidental. I had gone with Mr. F. A. Atkins to the Thursday noon service, which was my usual custom when I happened to be in London. Mr. Atkins had an appointment with the doctor, and after the service I waited in the outer vestry until Mr. Atkins appeared.

He came at length and intimated that Dr. Parker wished to see me. So I made my way into the inner sanctum.

Parker's greeting was abrupt and unexpected, though characteristic of the man.

"Why have you not been to see me before?"

"I had no idea that you wished to see me," I replied.

"I am always glad to see people who are worth seeing. Kindly sit down."

I took the chair indicated and wondered what was coming next.

"Now tell me about yourself and your books."

"I am afraid there is nothing to tell," I replied. "At least nothing that will interest you."

"Oh yes. There must be a great deal. Now tell me" And he reeled off at least a

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dozen questions as to my methods, my plots, my characters, my hours of work, etc., etc., etc.

I felt like a schoolboy called before the headmaster. He was so massive, so tremendously serious, I was slightly overawed.

When he had finished catechizing me he smiled genially. "You must come and see me again."

So we parted.

During his week's mission in Southport he held what he called an open conference in my church. The building was crowded. Most of the ministers of the town were present. I sat with him in the rostrum and opened the service.

After a short address, I forget the topic now, the conference was thrown open for the expression of views. A number of ministers and laymen spoke. Nearly all the time he kept nudging me and whispering "Get up and speak, get up and speak."

I had no wish to obtrude myself. Also I had nothing particular to say. However, I got to my feet at length and spoke for about ten minutes. Afterwards, in the vestry, we had almost a sparring match, though I have wondered since if he were not trying to draw me out.

"Why did you select that opening hymn?" he began.

"Because I like it."

"I don't."

"I am sorry for you."

"You know it was written by a unitarian?"

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"It is none the worse for that."

"Not necessarily ; but it is empty of religion."

"You mean dogma."

"No ! It lacks the evangelical note."

"We haven't a copy of Sankey's hymns."

"I did not ask for Sankey's hymns."

"But you prefer pious doggerel to poetry ? "

"A hymn need not be doggerel."

"That explains my selection."

He laughed heartily and genially. "You stick to your text."

"I try, anyhow."

"Good ! You must come and preach for me in the City Temple."

"I think not. I have preaching enough here."

"But I say you *must*. I have heard you speak."

"For ten minutes."

"It is enough. I have wanted to hear you speak ; now I have heard. You will enjoy preaching in the City Temple."

A few months later I got a pressing invitation from the doctor to supply for him on a given Sunday. He was going out of town, would I oblige ?

I considered the matter for a day or two and then, with considerable trepidation, consented. I had spent my life in the provinces. In the great towns of the north and midlands I felt at home. I was not yet forty, and the thought of preaching in London, especially in the City Temple,

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rather frightened me. However, having given my promise, there was nothing for me but to keep it.

I think I never felt more nervous in my life than when I climbed up into the City Temple pulpit. It was not the size of the place. I had spoken in larger buildings, but the atmosphere of the place was unfamiliar. I felt a stranger in a strange land.

That feeling, however, soon wore away. The congregation seemed friendly and appreciative, and that gave me encouragement.

That was my introduction to London, and as the Press was kind next day I had no reason for dissatisfaction.

CHAPTER X

TRAVEL

IT was a great pleasure to me, after my early years of more or less straitened means, to be able to indulge in the luxury of travel without financial embarrassment. Next in interest to my visit to the United States and Canada I place my trip to Algiers. It was in the early spring, and when my two companions and myself left Marseilles the weather was cold and stormy. It was on the evening of the following day that we dropped anchor in the beautiful bay of Algiers after an experience that we were neither of us likely to forget. The Mediterranean seemed determined to show us what it could do in the way of being nasty. The night had been bad enough, giving us little chance of sleep, but when the day dawned the wind increased in force and our small boat was tossed like a cork on the frothing waves. We neither of us had had any experience of these southern waters, but we had got the idea into our heads that the "tideless sea" would be almost as smooth as an inland lake. Never were three people more bitterly disappointed.

The Psalmist says somewhere, "Then are they glad because they be quiet." That was our

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feeling when at length we dropped anchor in the shelter of the bay, and saw around us the twinkling harbour lights. It was an intensely dark night, not a star being visible, but this was atoned for by the dancing lamps on the water. There seemed to be hundreds of them. No sooner had our propeller ceased to churn the water than we were surrounded by such a crowd of boats as I had never seen before, each boat carrying a flaring lamp or torch, and each being manned by a couple of half-naked Arabs. The way they fought and struggled and shrieked and manœuvred to get near the ship was a sight for the gods. They looked like so many imps of darkness escaped from inferno and bent on each other's destruction. How their boats did not capsize was to me a mystery. Dozens of them managed—I know not how—to clamber up the sides of the ship and drop on our deck, where they fought like demons for our luggage. The first mate appeared at length with a whip and drove them back to their boats. For a long time I stood against the rail watching the scene. The boats bobbed up and down like corks. The perspiring bodies of the blacks shone like japanned ware in the flaring lights. The whites of their eyes and their gleaming teeth made their faces appear hideous. Neither my friends nor myself were in any hurry to trust our lives into their hands. Most of the passengers however seemed in desperate haste to get ashore, so we waited until the pan-

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demonium had died down and were among the last to leave.

Getting on shore was like stepping from a cool garden into a hothouse. The air was soft and cloying. We no longer needed our overcoats or mufflers. We drove to the Mustapha, a green hill outside the town, in an open carriage and were glad of the soft breeze on our faces.

The manager of the Hotel Continental met us at the door with a smile of welcome, and we were soon sitting down to a well-cooked supper.

The next day for the most part we sat in the garden in the shade of the trees and enjoyed the warmth and the stillness. Below us circled the beautiful bay, the old city, with its flat roofs and its whitewashed walls rising steeply on its western side. Eastward rose the stately sides of the Atlas Mountains. Northward the sea sparkled like a huge sapphire. Now that we were safely landed and comfortably housed, the Mediterranean ceased its tantrums and looked positively alluring in the sunshine.

Nearly all nationalities seemed to be represented in the hotel. Greeks, Italians, Spaniards, Germans, French, and of course three or four Americans.

An American amused me greatly. He praised everything, the fruit, the flowers, the trees, the scenery; nothing was wrong, but he always ended by saying how much more perfect things were in the United States.

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One evening at dinner when we had reached the dessert course he picked up a small bunch of grapes and began to eat them. Then he paused, and looked round him with a smile. "Let no one say in my hearing," he remarked, "that these are not fine grapes, and the flavour is delicious. But perhaps you have not tasted our Kentucky grapes? No? Well, let me tell you that no one knows what a grape *can* be until he has tasted them. Why you might take just three, or at the most four, grapes and squeeze them, and you get a wineglass full, brimful, mind you, of the most delicious nectar you ever tasted."

A little later he cut an orange in half, and with a teaspoon scooped out the juice. Then he smacked his lips and smiled on us again. "This is no doubt a fine orange-growing country," he said. "The flavour of this orange is just great, and let no one deny it. But perhaps you have never sampled our Florida oranges? No? Ah well, gentlemen, you don't know anything about oranges until you have tasted them."

A dear old Scotch clergyman who had been wintering in Algiers for his health, was greatly distressed by the American's extravagant talk.

One day he joined me in the garden, and with a very grave face said: "I really am afraid that that American is not a good man."

"Really?" I questioned.

"To be quite frank I fear he does not always speak the truth."

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“ Oh. What has he been saying now ? ”

“ Well, when he came back to lunch to-day he said he was so hungry that he could eat a grave-stone. And when I was speaking yesterday of my poor digestion he said : ‘ Thank the Lord I could digest a bag of nails.’ Now you must admit that such statements——”

“ Oh, that is only his little way,” I laughed. “ He means no harm and deceives no one.”

But the old clergyman shook his head. “ I can’t trust a man,” he said, “ that doesn’t speak the truth.”

On leaving Algiers we embarked on a small steamer, and for two or three days moved slowly along the coast, calling at such places as Bougie and Philipville and Bona. At each place we spent several hours for the purpose of loading and unloading goods, so that we had plenty of time in which to explore each port of call. At Bona we left the steamer and took train for Constantine, a considerable distance inland. The train was marked “ Rapide ” on the time-table, and I wondered at what pace ordinary trains travelled. There appeared to be no stations en route. Nevertheless we halted every now and then for no apparent reason, and some of the passengers would get out and pluck wild flowers. About noon we pulled up with a sudden jerk, and on inquiring why we had come to a standstill were informed that we could get lunch if we wished at

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a desolate looking shanty some quarter of a mile away. There was no other house in sight or anything resembling a house, so that there was no fear of making a mistake or missing our way.

Of the lunch and the service the less said the better. I discovered that the best thing to do was to eat what was set before me and ask no questions.

The country through which we travelled during most of the day was monotonous and uninteresting. There was nothing to intercept the view across the wide expanse, a brown, bare, treeless, waterless waste, without roads or fences or even habitations as we understand the word. Now and then we passed an Arab encampment consisting of a number of sticks loosely tied together, with blankets thrown across the top, and surrounded by a stockade of prickly cactus.

Now and then we sighted a tall Arab shepherd leaning on his staff as if in deep contemplation, while around him his flock nibbled at the scanty herbage.

At other times he would be moving forward with long strides, while his flock followed at his heels. It seemed to me as if I had been thrust back twenty or thirty centuries to the days of the patriarchs.

It was dark when we pulled up outside Constantine. Porters took charge of our luggage, and we walked across a deep ravine by a rather fine iron bridge into the city. The place boasted

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one fairly decent hotel, where we had secured rooms, that is two rooms had been allotted to the three of us. So we drew lots for the single room and Unwin won it.

The double-bedded room was at the front, fairly large, with a floor of brown glazed tiles, and a minimum of furniture. Jones, my room mate, who lived in considerable luxury at home, having made a huge fortune out of the manufacture of sewing machines, looked a little disconsolately at the rugless floor. At length he said with a smile : " Could you oblige me with a postage stamp ? "

" Of course," I said. " But why—— ? "

" I would like a bit of carpet to undress on."

Early next morning I got out of bed and went to the window and looked out. In the small square below a number of Arabs lay on the ground apparently fast asleep, their heads wrapped in their mantles, and resting on large square stones which served for pillows. I wondered if they were to be envied. Civilization as we understand it had not touched them. They were independent of houses and furniture, and were untouched by the polite attentions of the rate collector. When they came to town they did not worry about hotels and table d'hôte meals. They exchanged their produce for such things as they needed, and then returned again to their solitudes and their wide horizons. Yet one sometimes wondered what lay behind their dark impassive faces.

Constantine stands on a huge square rock.

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On two sides runs the ravine of which I have spoken. The sides are perpendicular, and I judged it to be well on to a hundred feet deep. On the third side the ground falls away suddenly, leaving a perpendicular wall of rock quite unscalable. Only on the fourth and narrowest side is it open to the country. In olden times it was regarded as an impregnable city. No enemy could approach it on three of its sides and on the fourth it could easily be defended. The bridge across the ravine at the south-west corner is of quite modern date. The houses are built close to the edge of the cliff ; in some cases they seem to overhang the abyss.

The interesting event of most days was the return of the camels from the desert, laden with dates. They came in single file, with long, measured strides, their heads high in the air, their noses thrust forward. They always struck me as being a curious combination of patience and bad temper, patient in their long marches, and yet nearly always snarling when at rest. They seemed to dislike getting on to their knees and haunches, and being relieved of their load, and their owners had to be careful to keep out of reach of their teeth. A useful animal no doubt, but by no means an affectionate, or even a friendly one.

We arrived in Tunis the day after the boat left La Golette, and as there was only a weekly

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service, there was nothing for it but to make ourselves as comfortable as possible during the next six days.

It has been said that Tunis is the most oriental city in the world. It may be so. It certainly is one of the most ancient, and is like no other that I have ever seen. Its bazaars for instance are built of brick like small railway tunnels, crossing each other at right angles, and lighted by square holes in the roof. Into these tunnels crowd most of the shopkeepers and handicraft workers of the city. Shopping or bargaining seems to be the chief pleasure of an oriental whether man or woman. No seller expects to get the price he asks, and no buyer expects to get the article he wants at the price he first offers. To the oriental the whole business is a long drawn-out game to be played carefully and cautiously. The game may last half a day or a whole day, that does not matter; the oriental is not troubled about time; there is always to-morrow.

I found the bazaars not only the coolest, but the most interesting part of the city. One or two things I meant to buy, and after three or four days of haggling I got them. I flattered myself that I could play the game as well as an oriental, but I was mistaken. I was cheated in the end.

One day we drove out to what had been the Bey's Palace, a large stuccoed house surrounding a tessellated courtyard, in the centre of which was

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a fountain, and opening off it the suites of rooms that had been occupied by his wives. There must have been fifteen or twenty of these suites, all the same size, and all furnished exactly alike. I presume the Bey had been anxious not to show favouritism or give cause for jealousy.

Stretching away from one side of the palace was an extensive orangery or orange orchard. One of the gardeners took us to a particular tree and told us to fill our pockets with fruit, which we did. That night before going to bed we sampled them, and certainly, in the language of the American we had met in Algiers, we neither of us knew till then what an orange *could* be. Frankly it was the most luscious fruit I have ever tasted. There is no comparison between an orange plucked ripe from the tree and the oranges we get in England, which are in most instances plucked green and left to ripen on the way.

Another day we drove out to Carthage, or rather to the place where Carthage once stood. There is nothing left of it to-day but mounds of broken bricks. It seems almost incredible that a city that once disputed the supremacy of Rome should have so completely disappeared, and that no vestige of its great harbour should remain. And yet such is the case. The place is utterly deserted and forsaken. Not even an Arab pitches his tent there, not a sound breaks the eerie stillness of the place. We crossed and re-crossed the poignant desolation and searched for some relic

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that we might keep, but could find nothing. Outside what had been the city boundary a crematorium or cemetery had been unearthed, and in small earthenware pitchers let into blocks of concrete a few handfuls of calcined bones could still be seen. That is all that is left of the proud city and its proud people.

We drove back to Tunis through a grove of olive trees that are said to be more than a thousand years old, a statement that was easy to believe when we looked at their gnarled and twisted trunks.

The population of Tunis is composed of three distinct races. One half I should judge to be pure Arab, three-eighths of the other half oriental Jews, the rest Europeans. The Arab women dress in a fashion all their own. They cover their faces with black veils instead of white. Instead of long robes dropping from their shoulders to their feet they wear tights or silk puttees. An embroidered tunic reaching to their hips completes their costume. The hall mark of beauty is fatness. A slender woman is unattractive in the eyes of the men. The fatter a woman is the more beautiful she is. Hence all the girls are fed on the richest kinds of food, and as they are clothed in the manner I have described, their appearance as they walk the streets can be imagined.

The one Sunday we spent in Tunis we attended the English church, a corrugated iron building

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that would seat perhaps a hundred people. It was not an inspiring service. The clergyman was old and asthmatical, the sermon was up in the air and touched life at no point whatever. The only thing that interested me was the stained glass window at the end of the chancel. It was placed there in memory of Payne, the author of "Home Sweet Home." Payne, it would seem, had been United States Consul in Tunis, and had died there.

At the foot of the window was his name and the date of his death followed by a passage of scripture. It was to me an unfamiliar passage, and from where I sat it took me a considerable time to decipher it. At length, however, I was able to spell it out:—

"The Lord hath brought me Home."

At once it struck me that it would be a suitable text from which to preach when I got back. I did not know in what part of the Bible it was to be found, but that I could easily discover when I got to my books.

The day following we sailed from La Golette en route for Malta, and as the weather was fine, and the sea smooth, I was able to make some headway with my sermon.

We spent part of two days and a night in Malta and then set sail for Naples. Here we hired a guide as we were anxious to miss nothing that was worth seeing. Naples as a city is not remark-

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able except for situation. I visited it again many years later, and found it unchanged. Our guide took us as far as Bayae on the one side, and Pompeii on the other. We saw the place where St. Paul is said to have landed on his way to Rome, crossed the Styx on the shoulders of men who looked like bandits, boiled eggs in a spring that bubbled and steamed in a cavern, descended the crater of an extinct volcano, visited natural baths where you could fill your lungs with hydrogen in one room and pure oxygen in another, and saw village dances in pagan temples. Indeed our guide was as anxious to show us everything of interest as we were to be shown.

The day we spent at Pompeii was to me somewhat depressing. It was impossible to keep one's imagination from playing round the awful tragedy. Instinctively one tried to realize its strange and appalling suddenness. Almost before the people knew what was happening the city was buried. On every hand there are evidences of how the inhabitants were taken unawares. The ashes fell silently and filled the streets and rose high above the house tops. It would seem as if no one escaped. How could anyone escape through that smothering downpour of dust and ashes? Even the sentry at the gate was buried where he stood.

To-day you wander through a city of roofless houses, your footsteps echo on the worn lava pavements. You note the drinking trough at the

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corner, you enter empty rooms and look—if you care to—at the pictures painted on the walls. You sit on the steps of the amphitheatre and try to picture it all.

One of my companions expressed himself tersely as we left the place.

“It must have been a second Sodom,” he said. “I don’t wonder the Almighty destroyed it.”

It was night when we reached Rome, and I confess I experienced something of a shock when I found myself in a big, noisy, modern railway station. Could this be Rome, the city of the Cæsars? I might have arrived in Birmingham or Manchester. I stared through the window of the hotel bus as we drove away through a crowded, gas-lighted street, and tried to reconcile all this modernity with the Rome I had imagined.

It was not until the following morning when I stood among the broken pillars of the Forum, with the huge circle of the Colosseum blocking out the distance that I was able to get the right mental perspective.

I had read so much about Rome that I knew exactly what I wanted to see, and during the few days we were there we kept our guide busy from morning to night. He was an educated man and knew his city like a book.

I know that this hurrying from place to place and point to point is not the proper way to see

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anything, but when one has only a few days to spare what else can one do? One might spend a year in Rome and yet not see it as it ought to be seen.

St. Peter's disappointed me. Its interior is gaudy and blatant. Its exterior with its vast sweep of colonnades for some reason did not come up to my expectations. Our own much smaller St. Paul's is to my mind far more impressive both without and within. For the rest, Rome filled me with delight.

We continued our journey toward home by way of Genoa and the South of France. At Monte Carlo my companions left me, and I travelled the rest of the way to London alone.

My wife had come up to town earlier in the day, and was anxiously awaiting my arrival in the lounge of the hotel.

Much as I had enjoyed the trip it was good to be back in England again, good to hear the English tongue spoken on every hand, good to sit down to an English dinner, and especially good to see my wife sitting opposite me at the table.

What a lot we had to talk about and how quickly the evening slipped away.

Three evenings later we arrived in Southport, and the next morning being Sunday I opened Cruden's Concordance to look for my text. I had completed the sermon before reaching Naples. For a moment I stood aghast. It seemed as

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though a practical joke had been played on me. The complete text read :—

“The Lord hath brought me home empty.”

It was so appallingly true. I felt as though I could not possibly face my congregation with a text like that. And yet what could I do? There was no time to prepare another sermon. Willy nilly I would have to make the best of it.

Then a happy thought struck me. I would not say where the text was to be found. I would just tell the story where and how I had found it, and then deliver the sermon I had prepared.

It answered admirably. The word “empty” was studiously kept out of sight, and no one seemed to guess how the complete passage ran.

That afternoon in the homes of my people there was such a searching of the Bible as was rarely ever known. Those who had concordances got at the truth without any difficulty, but many of the others searched long and diligently, and searched in vain.

Before the day was out the wise ones were chuckling among themselves, and gently teasing those who didn't know. Of course they told in the end.

In the vestry, before the evening's service, my stewards smiled broadly, and threw at me knowing glances and hinted slyly at my diplomacy. But I had got out of my difficulty and felt perfectly satisfied.

CHAPTER XI

ODDS AND ENDS

THERE is a story told of a Lancashire man who explained to a friend why he left the Methodists and joined the Church of England.

“ It was all a question of money,” he said. “ Thou knows what the Methodists are like. They are always after your money. It’s money, money all the time. How many pounds a year it cost me while I were with them I don’t know.”

“ And what now ? ” questioned his friend.

“ Oh you get a cheap religion i’ the church. I’ve been attendin’ a year now, and how much dost thou think it’s cost me ? ”

“ Haven’t a notion.”

“ Well, it’s cost me just three and ninepence.”

“ Then thou’st been sucked in, lad.”

“ Sucked in ? How dost thou make that out ? ”

“ Why, I mean thou hast paid for a lot more religion then thou’st got.”

Now I think it is quite possible that the friend was correct in his estimate. Yet I should not like to be called upon to decide the measure of a man’s religion by the amount he contributes to his church. I have known mean men, mean in all

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the relationships of life who have contributed large, and what is termed " princely," sums to religious objects, and I have known men who, outwardly at any rate, were very religious, strict in their religious observances and brimming over with piety, who were excessively mean in their contributions to the cause of religion. It may be that in the one case the man paid for more religion than he had, and in the other that he had more religion than he paid for. It is not for me to decide.

Speaking generally, however, I fancy very few of us have what may be termed an expensive taste in religion. We may have an expensive taste in cigars or in food or in amusements or in clothes ; but when it comes to religion the smallest coin is often deemed sufficient.

I remember on one occasion lecturing in Yorkshire in aid of some fund connected with the church. There was an audience of at least a thousand people. The collection amounted to something less than five pounds, and that included the chairman's contribution. After the lecture the chairman, who was my host, invited a number of his friends and neighbours to meet me at supper, and if the supper itself did not cost more than five pounds I am no judge of the value of food and drink.

The disproportion between the collection and the supper struck me as a little odd. The Yorkshire people are amongst the most hospitable in

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the world, and yet the collection that evening was only about a penny per head, which certainly did not indicate an expensive taste in religion.

As far as my experience goes, and it is not inconsiderable, most of the churches are exhausting their strength and energy in a perpetual struggle to make both ends meet. Scarcely a day passed that I did not get a letter from some church official appealing for help, and these appeals came from all parts of the country.

It was assumed that I could help in two ways. First, by preaching or lecturing. I don't think it was ever suggested that my sermon or lecture might be of moral or spiritual benefit; it may be that that was taken for granted, though I doubt it. The one thing aimed at was money to help to pay off debt, or to meet current expenses. I had a feeling sometimes that I was regarded, not as a preacher or teacher, but as a more or less popular entertainer.

The second way it was assumed I could render help was by sending a set of my books to be sold at a bazaar. The naïveté of some of these appeals was quite amusing, and they came from places I had never seen or heard of. I was told that my books were quite popular in the neighbourhood, and the writer was quite sure that they would have a ready sale, especially if they were autographed. In no case would they be sold below the published price, and in case they were not

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disposed of they would be given to the poor, or added to the Sunday-school library.

It was all very flattering, and there breathed through all a nice spirit of Christian charity. I suppose that none of these good people would ever dream of writing to some distant shoemaker and ask him to send a pair of shoes on the same terms ; nor would it occur to them that before I could send them a set of my books I should have to buy them, and that it would be much less trouble to send them the money direct.

There seems to be an impression abroad that authors get their own books for nothing, that they cost nothing to produce, and that a compliment is being paid him when he is asked to contribute out of his unsaleable stock to a charity bazaar.

Of course it is comparatively easy to answer a letter, and easier still to let it go unanswered. It is when a deputation waits on you that the trouble begins. I got to have a perfect horror of deputations. I knew that it was not a bit of use fighting, or arguing, or protesting. They always had an unanswerable case, and before they left another vacant date in my diary would be filled.

So it came about that I was nearly killed by what was no doubt meant for kindness. There could be no hardship in devoting one day to a good cause ; of course not, if it were the only one. It was the multiplication of the ones that made the hardship, and turned life into a treadmill.

The only way by which I could escape the

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incessant strain was by going clean out of the country now and then to some place where letters could not reach me, and where deputations ceased from troubling.

In those rambles abroad I occasionally met exceedingly interesting people, people who entertained me with fresh views, and sometimes with startlingly new ideas.

It was in Switzerland I first met Conan Doyle. My wife and I were staying at the Rifel Alp Hotel, above Zermatt. A cosmopolitan crowd had gathered. There were university dons, members of Parliament, schoolmasters, and church dignitaries, among the latter Archbishop Benson, who was accompanied by his wife, and his son E. F., the author of "Dodo."

English people are much less stiff and formal abroad than at home. Introductions are easily effected. We fell into groups after dinner, and discussed all manner of subjects. In this way I got to know Doyle and Benson, and the Archbishop, and a number of other people.

One morning Doyle, Benson, and myself, went for a little jaunt together to the Findelan Glacier. It was a pleasant walk for the most part, mainly through pinewoods. Then we descended into a narrow valley and found ourselves at the foot of the glacier which rose above us steep as a house roof, and in parts much steeper. Our guide went in front and with his axe cut steps in the ice and we ascended in single file. Once on the top

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walking was comparatively easy, and we tramped on side by side, skirting round boulders and making detours to avoid crevasses.

Conversation became general again, and by and by narrowed into the particular. I have noticed that authors rarely talk shop when together, but on this occasion (it was Benson who started it) we fell to talking about Sherlock Holmes. Doyle confessed frankly that he was tired of his own creation. "The fact is," he said, "he has got to be an 'old man of the sea' about my neck, and I intend to make an end of him. If I don't he'll make an end of me."

"How are you going to do it?" I asked.

"I haven't decided yet," he laughed. "But I'm determined to put an end to him somehow."

"Rather rough on an old friend," I suggested, "who has brought you fame and fortune."

The talk went on for some time longer, Benson making out a strong case for the continuance of Holmes.

We reached at length a wide crevasse, and stood for some time on the brink looking down into its bluey-green depths.

"If you are determined on making an end of Holmes," I said, "why not bring him out to Switzerland and drop him down a crevasse? It would save funeral expenses."

"Not a bad idea," Doyle laughed in his hearty way, and then the conversation drifted to other topics.

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Whether or not my suggestion had anything to do with the fate of Holmes I do not know. Anyhow Doyle did bring him out a few months later, and caused him to disappear over the Reichenbach Falls. And, speaking quite frankly, I think it would have been better for Holmes's reputation if he had never re-appeared.

Later that year I accepted an invitation to the Royal Literary Fund Dinner, which was held, if I remember aright, in the King's Hall of the Holborn Restaurant. Two or three things in connexion with that dinner stand out very clearly in my mind.

The late King Edward VII, then Prince of Wales, occupied the chair, and what struck me particularly was the beauty and resonance of his voice. It is not an easy hall to speak in, as I have proved by experience. I have heard many speakers there whose voices became a mere mumble in the distant corners. But the late king's voice could be heard distinctly in every part and apparently without the least effort.

John Morley, now Lord Morley, followed, and had a great reception, but I failed to catch many of his sentences. If many of our public men would only sustain the full note to the end of the sentence they would be much more effective as speakers.

My seat at the table happened to be between Rider Haggard and Lecky, the historian, while

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Samuel Smiles, the author of "Self-Help," sat directly opposite.

It was my first appearance at such a function in London, and I was greatly interested in the crowd. Editors, publishers, newspaper proprietors, journalists, essayists, novelists, ambassadors and members of both Houses of Parliament jostled each other in the reception room and in the passages, as such crowds usually do. As a provincial and a stranger I knew very few people, but a journalist friend of mine who seemed to know everybody by sight pointed out to me some of the more distinguished guests. I had quite a number of shocks that evening. I suppose most people form mental pictures of people whose names are familiar. There was a poet, for instance, whose exquisitely tender and graceful lines I had long admired, and I had pictured in my mind a young man with dreamy eyes and a pale, ascetic face. Hence when my friend pointed out a big, rather coarse-looking man, with bulging eyes and heavy jowl, who looked as though a good dinner was one of the chief joys of his life, I almost gasped.

Then a thin, almost wizened man passed us, with a slight stoop in his shoulders, a long sad face, and a tired, pathetic look in his eyes. "That," said my friend, "is——" whispering the name of one of the most humorous writers of the day. I wanted to laugh. It seemed so absurd that that cadaverous and pathetic figure

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could write stuff that made people rock with laughter.

Then there was the editor of a great morning journal of whom I had heard so much, and who was regarded by many people as one of the prophets of his age, a badly dressed, snuffy looking individual, who might have passed anywhere for a village shoemaker.

Indeed I got so many shocks that nothing surprised me after a while. There were distinguished looking men with undistinguished names, and great men with small bodies and unprepossessing faces.

Nature seems to be the champion bluffer and humorist. She appears to delight in playing pranks and throwing us off our guard.

I tried once to help a burglar to lead an honest life. He had spent twenty-two years in various prisons and penal settlements, and always received full marks for good behaviour. He was one of the mildest mannered men I have ever met, with quite a refined face and gentle pleading eyes. He might have passed anywhere for a church deacon or a Sunday-school teacher, but no one would ever have taken him for a burglar. I tried my hardest to keep him straight, as did his wife, a hard-working little woman, but within six months he was back in prison again.

Once only I attended a murder trial. It was a notorious case. The murder had been of the most revolting kind. When the prisoner stepped

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into the dock I almost gasped. A good-looking young fellow of twenty-two, well-dressed, well set-up, and modest in demeanour. It seemed impossible to believe that he could be guilty of so foul a crime, and yet it was proved to the very hilt. That young fellow's face haunted me for weeks after, and ever since I have given the Assize Courts a wide berth.

It is a very unsafe thing to judge by appearances. The Bill Sikeses of the world have not all brutal faces. The converse is often nearer the truth. So often have appearances led people astray that I have noticed lately a reaction in favour of ugly men, especially by women novelists. The handsome man is the villain of the piece, the ugly man the hero.

I am not sure, however, that the average reader likes it. We are prejudiced in favour of good looks. A hero with a broken nose and a squint has a good deal to live down, and a heroine who is unmistakably plain needs a clever biographer to make her attractive.

I remember being once guest at a house where the wife had only one eye, and an ugly scar on the cheek below the empty socket, and I could not help wondering whether the terrible disfigurement came before marriage or after.

It was foolish of me, perhaps. What, after all, had looks to do with the real woman? Yet the right side of her face was to me repulsive.

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Perhaps to the husband the disfigurement endeared her to him. Let us hope so at any rate.

It was not often that I went to London in those days. I was kept too busy at home.

I recall a holiday I spent in Norway with three friends, and another long holiday my wife and I spent in the Riviera and Northern Italy.

In Norway we quite disorganized the traffic of Bergen one afternoon, quite unwittingly of course. We hired four carriages, and set out to explore the city and its environs, and naturally, being Englishmen, we kept to the left-hand side of the street, to the demoralization of all vehicular traffic. The more people shouted and raised their hands and cracked their whips the more confused we got, and the more confused got every one else. We did not understand a word of their language, and they, of course, did not understand ours.

Fortunately there were no policemen about or we might have been haled before the authorities. We tumbled to the position after a while, and managed to get away amid a chorus of shouts and jeers and imprecations.

A fortnight later when we undertook a four days' journey in carriages from Laerdal to the Randsfjord our experience came in handy. We got into no further trouble by keeping on the wrong side of the road.

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On our way home from Christiania there was a solemn-faced Scotchman on board who made a number of people angry by telling of a curious phenomenon he had witnessed during one of his trips across the North Sea. Quite a little crowd had gathered round him, and every now and then one or two of them would walk away with a look of disgust on their faces.

When I came up the Scotchman told his story again. How many times he had told it previously I do not know. His face was quite grave and his manner solemn.

"I was standing on deck about where we are now," he said, "and about two hundred yards astern I saw a whale and a little dog sitting on its tail."

"What nonsense," said a middle-aged woman in a tone of disgust.

"I can assure you, madam," he said in grieved accents, "it's the truth as I'm a Christian man."

"Christian," she scoffed. "If you were a Christian you would not tell such a falsehood," and she walked away in high dudgeon.

Then a man suddenly burst into a loud guffaw, and clapping both hands on his stomach doubled up with laughter.

"You say," piped a thin voice, "that you saw the little dog sitting on the whale's tail."

"I said I saw a whale," replied the Scotchman, "and a little dog sitting on its tail."

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The little crowd broke up suddenly. Some looked disgusted, some smiled broadly, others laughed till their sides shook.

A little later I overheard a man telling the story to some one who had not heard it, and he told it wrong.

It is surprising how many people there are who, in telling a story, always miss the point.

I am reminded of an Oxford Professor who, going out to dinner one evening, met an impecunious undergraduate wearing a new suit of clothes. Brown was always so hard up that the Professor was surprised.

"Why, Brown," he said, "I see you have a new suit of clothes."

"Yes," said Brown.

"But my dear fellow, the coat is too short."

"Oh, never mind," said Brown cheerfully.

"It will be long enough before I get another."

The retort struck the Professor as being so delightfully apt that he resolved to relate the incident at dinner, which he did with a good deal of circumstance.

"And what do you think his reply was?" queried the Professor as he drew to the end of his story. "You will never guess, of course. But you will think it funny and smart when I tell you."

"Well, what is it?" queried his host.

"Oh, he retorted as quick as a flash, 'it'll be a long time before I get another.'"

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"But I see nothing funny in that," said his host.

"No," said the Professor, looking crestfallen. "But I can assure you it was awfully funny as Brown said it."

I referred just now to a holiday spent in Italy. It was during my second visit to that most delightful of all Italian cities, Florence, that I happened on a circumstance trifling in itself, and yet to me exceedingly pleasant and suggestive.

I had been making a round of the studios, a pleasant pastime of mine. In the studio of M. Lapini, a well-known Italian artist, I fell in love with a piece of statuary, and inquired its price. The price quoted was considerably more than I was prepared to give, I forget the exact figure now.

Before I left I made him a sporting offer. "I will give you twenty pounds," I said.

"Impossible," was the reply. So the visit ended.

That evening after dinner M. Lapini came to see me at my hotel. "I have reconsidered your offer," he said, "and have decided to accept it."

"Very good," I replied. "What sum do you require on account?"

"No sum at all," was the answer. "When you receive my work in your home undamaged

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then you can send me a cheque for the full amount."

"A bit risky, isn't it?" I laughed. "I am an entire stranger to you. How do you know I won't cheat?"

He spread his hands and smiled. "You are English," he said. "I do much business with English gentlemen. They do not cheat."

I had often felt a little proud of being English, but never more so than at that moment. The compliment I felt was not so much to myself as to the race to which I belonged. It was a pleasure to be reminded that the English people had won such a reputation for honesty and probity that this Florentine sculptor was prepared to trust me to the tune of twenty pounds simply on the ground that I was an Englishman.

As I write these words I look up at the sweetly pensive face chiselled in marble that stands on its pedestal in a corner of the room, and I think of the happy days spent in Florence, that "City of Flowers and Flower of Cities." No city has ever impressed me so profoundly or so delightfully. It is almost too much to hope that I shall ever see it again; but the memory of it, with its beautiful encircling hills, will remain with me to the end of the day.

CHAPTER XII

A FRESH START

AFTER giving the matter my careful consideration I decided to leave Southport at the end of my twelfth year. I had done all that I set out to do, and more, and I greatly needed rest. In due course I announced my decision.

My officials complained that it left them all too short a time in which to find a "suitable" successor. All the best-known men in the denomination were booked one or two years in advance. Would I not remain another year? That would give them time in which to "look round."

In the end, much against my own interests, and against my better judgment, I yielded to their entreaty. I consider it bad for any church and congregation to have a resignation hanging over their heads for so long a time.

Hence my thirteenth year was in some ways the least satisfactory of my ministry there. The church and congregation were unsettled. My successor was appointed early in the year, and everyone was more or less on the *qui vive* wondering what the new man would be like. I was unsettled myself. My interests were divided.

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I found it difficult to keep up my enthusiasm for the various organizations. Moreover, expecting to be free from the oversight of a church, I had entered into dozens of engagements to preach and lecture in various parts of the country. I had signed a contract to write a serial for a monthly magazine ; and I had for the first time in my life to find a house and furnish it. Hence I was more hardly pressed than ever before. I had to work almost night and day. In addition to which was a very natural anxiety about the future. I was giving up a certainty for an uncertainty, sacrificing a regular income for the hazard of public favour. I had a wife and four children dependent on me, and my health at the time was anything but satisfactory. For years past I had been burning the candle at both ends.

Yet I never doubted for a moment the rightness of the course I had taken. I could not possibly go on at the old pace. One branch of my work had to be lopped off, and it seemed best from every point of view that a merely local ministry should come to an end. A thousand pulpits and platforms in the country were still open to me, and I could choose my own place and time.

I had decided on London as a place of residence, but I knew only a small part of the centre of it. I did not want to live in town, and I did not want to be too far out, but I was indifferent as to whether I settled north, south, east, or west. So I spent many tiring days in going from one

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suburb to another. I made a complete circle of the entire district, and finally decided on the north. It appealed to me more than any other part.

There was no lack of empty houses in those days, but very few that suited my taste, and coming from the provinces the rents seemed exorbitant. So I returned to Southport again and again, having settled nothing. Ultimately I bought a house which had been recently built, and have lived in it ever since.

During one of my journeys up to town I had rather an amusing experience. At Crewe a clergyman and two ladies got into the compartment in which I was seated, the ladies I judged to be mother and daughter. The clergyman managed to secure the corner seat opposite me, the young lady sat next to him, the mother beyond. Directly the train pulled out of the station the young lady opened her satchel and took out a book and began to read, and I was interested to notice that the book was one of my own.

The clergyman glanced at the young lady from time to time out of the corner of his eye. Now and then he scanned the columns of his newspaper, but he did not seem greatly interested. Occasionally he looked for a while out of the window.

At length he turned to the young lady with a smile and a question :

“ You seem greatly interested in your book ? ”

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"I am—very," she answered, without looking up.

"A novel, I presume?"

"Yes, one of Silas Hocking's. Have you read it?" And she showed him the title on the cover.

"No, and what is more I should not like to waste my time in reading it."

"Really?" she questioned in surprise.

"For young people especially, whose minds are unformed," he went on, "I think they are very harmful."

"Then you have read some of them?" she asked.

"Well, no. I do not read many novels, but when I do I always select the best."

"Then how are you able to judge?"

"My wife has read several. We were considering them for our Sunday-school library. She read me quite a number of extracts, and I decided at once that they were not to be admitted."

"I don't think you should judge by extracts," she said. "I read each new one as it comes out, and I think they all hold up a high ideal of life."

"Oh, I don't say they are immoral," he broke in hastily. "Don't think I mean that. I believe from what I have heard that they are quite moral in tone, in that perhaps lies their chief danger. People are taken in, deceived as it were, and fail to detect the poison lurking underneath."

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At this point I could no longer forbear breaking into the conversation.

"Excuse me," I said. "But 'poison' strikes me as a rather strong word. Would you mind saying in what you consider the poison consists?"

"You have read this man's books?" he asked a little tartly.

"I have dipped into them occasionally," I replied.

"And you have not detected their heterodoxy?"

"Perhaps you would define what you mean by heterodoxy?" I questioned.

Instantly he fired up. "There you go," he said. "Instead of answering a plain question you ask another." He was a clergyman; he was jealous for the formularies of the church; her creeds were being secretly undermined. The writer they were discussing was a dissenter, a schismatic.

But I was not to be put off by this outburst. I pressed him for definitions.

He became oracular. Laymen could not be expected to understand theology. It required years of study. He knew what he was talking about, and it was his duty to protect the young, to save them from everything that would undermine their faith.

So the discussion went on with a good deal of irrelevance until the train pulled up at Rugby, where the clergyman got out. But he was so full of his theme, and so determined to stick to his

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guns, that he stood at the carriage door talking to me until the train moved out again.

Just as the train began to move I handed him my card, and the last I saw of him he was staring at it with an exceedingly puzzled expression on his face.

I am sure, however, that he would remain quite pleased with the result of the interview ; he was that kind of man. It would be a satisfaction to him that unwittingly he had given me a piece of his mind and let me know what he thought of me.

Furnishing a house was a new experience. For twenty years I had lived in a circuit house, trodden on circuit carpets and slept in a circuit bed. Now I was to have a house of my own and my own furniture. This was a very pleasant prospect, and even more pleasant to my wife. We were like young people about to get married. We went from shop to shop and warehouse to warehouse with all the enthusiasm of youth and inexperience. We were in the mood to say "hang the cost." For once in our life we would have what we liked. For twenty years we had had to put up with what other people thought was necessary. Now we would decide for ourselves.

It was a revelation to me how many things were required. I had no idea that a dozen rooms would eat up so much. However, we went ahead

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quite gaily. "In for a penny, in for a pound" was our motto. Having got a house we had to furnish it, and we found vast pleasure in doing it.

I had to return to Southport for a valedictory meeting. I would have avoided it if I could. I hate farewells, and would have liked to have slipped away quietly without any fuss. There was no help for it, however. My wife and I had to listen to kind words, and receive presents, and shake hands with all and sundry, and then down came the curtain with a run, and the lights were extinguished.

There was a pathos about it all that cannot be put into words. Thirteen of the best years of my life had passed like a tale that is told. How big things look in prospect, how small in retrospect. After years of travail we reach the hill top we saw in the distance, and lo, it is not a hill at all, scarcely a mound. We imagined we were doing such great things, hewing a highway through the thicket for those who came after, and when we look back we discover that the thicket has grown up again behind us. The work has all to be done over again by those who follow. We have written our names not in unperishable rock but on a flowing stream. We tell our little tale and in a few days it is forgotten.

It is well that the young men should see visions. The old can only dream dreams, sad dreams for the most part, dreams of harvests that never

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ripened, and fruit that fell before it was ripe. We should be happier if we could keep our illusions, but they fall from us one by one. I started out with drawn sword to slay the giants of intemperance, and impurity, and war, and I have lived to see those giants increase in strength and grow more formidable year by year.

What then? It does not follow that they will not yet be slain. I have faith in the eternal purpose that runs like a golden thread through all the events of time.

I returned to my new home to begin a fresh page in life's little story. I was only forty-six, and though I had worn myself almost to a shadow with incessant toil, I had not bated one jot of heart or hope. After a few months' rest I hoped to hoist sail again and steer across fresh seas, but guided by the same star.

The sense of freedom that came to me I cannot easily describe. I felt like a boy let out of school. If I was not entirely care-free I felt freer than I had done for five and twenty years. No more Leaders' Meetings, or Trustees' Meetings, or Quarterly Meetings, or District Meetings. No more worry or fret about this organization or that. No more listening to the complaints of the pessimists or the disgruntled. No more trying to reconcile people who persisted in disagreeing. I had slipped clean out of harness, got rid of bit and bridle, and could walk the streets unknown and unnoticed.

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I don't care how successful a minister may be, how completely he may be allowed to work in his own way (and no man was allowed a freer hand than myself), he is still the servant of the church. That is inevitable, and if he is wise he will never forget it. He may be captain of the ship, but he can do nothing without his officers and crew. Their loyalty and help are essential if there is to be a safe and prosperous voyage. Well, I was no longer captain, no longer anything but just an ordinary citizen, one in a crowd, a solitary human among millions of others equally solitary and equally unknown. The sensation was new and strange, but none the less delightful on that account.

Among the first to call on me were Doctor Parker and his wife. They drove over from Hampstead and stayed to tea. The doctor was as jolly as a sandboy, full of fun and frolic, and delighted my children with his free and easy ways. Mrs. Parker was gracious and charming as always; a tall, well-built, handsome woman, who looked as if she would outlive her husband by many years; and yet she was the first to go.

Parker was in such a rollicking mood that I ventured to ask him if a story I had heard about him were true.

"What is the story?" he laughed.

"Well, it is said that one Sunday night a woman with a baby sat in one of the centre pews.

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In the middle of your sermon the baby got restless and began to cry. The woman tried to quieten it, but failing, got up and began pushing her way into the aisle, when you paused in your sermon and said : ' My good woman, don't trouble yourself. The baby doesn't frighten me.'

" ' No,' she snapped. ' But you frighten the baby.' "

The doctor laughed heartily, but while he would not admit that the story was true neither would he deny it.

He was not particularly good as a story teller himself, but he loved to hear a good story. I remember once his being immensely tickled by a simple story I told him.

It was said that two Cornish miners were discussing the sermon one morning after service.

" Why, Bill," said one of them. " As far as I can make out from the sermon this morning there ain't no such place as Hell."

" That seemed to me what the preacher said, anyhow," Bill replied.

" But, Bill," said the other with consternation in his voice. " If there baint no such place as Hell what's to become o' we ? "

Parker lay back in his chair and roared. " Poor homeless children," he said. " What *is* to become of them ? "

I grew to be very fond of the big dogmatic preacher. In spite of his pompous manner he

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had the heart of a child. People complained that he was egotistical, and theatrical, and overbearing; but intentionally he was none of these things. He was not without egotism it is true, but I don't think he was consciously theatrical. His manner was the man. He could not have been other if he had tried. He was just himself.

During the later years of his ministry I occupied his pulpit more frequently than any other man, and I discovered how much he was loved by his flock.

He and Dr. Maclaren of Manchester were, in my judgment the greatest preachers of their day. In a sense they were not to be compared; rather they were to be contrasted.

Parker painted with a bigger brush and on a larger canvas, and laid on his colours with a more careless hand. Maclaren was subtle, logical, polished. Parker was massive and daring, and often suggested more than he knew. He flung out thoughts at random, and left them as seeds in the minds of those that listened.

Soon after I settled in London I made the acquaintance of Mr. Lloyd George. He had already made a name for himself in the House of Commons as a keen debater and a very effective speaker. An extreme man, people said, and utterly fearless, but undoubtedly a clever politician. Some of his friends thought he would go far, others were less sanguine. Anyhow, I was anxious to see him and hear him.

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We met on the platform of the City Temple, the occasion being the tercentenary of the death of John Bunyan. After I had made my speech the chairman called on Mr. Lloyd George. He began in an easy conversational manner, and continued in the same style almost to the end. It struck me that he had not prepared himself very carefully, but trusted largely to the inspiration of the moment. The speech was loose in structure, more or less disconnected, with ragged ends here and there. He said very little about Bunyan, and followed no particular line of argument. He was at times humorous, with here and there a flash of wit. He had one sly dig at "Joey" but on the whole avoided politics. Not a great speech by any means, yet it delighted the audience. One could not resist the charm of his personality nor the easy grace of his style. It was not so much what he said as his manner of saying it that carried us along so easily and pleasantly.

A year or two later we met again on the same platform. At the time I was beginning a serial story in some weekly journal, and the proprietors of the journal had adorned—or disfigured—the hoardings of the country with my photograph enlarged to life size. Above the photograph was my name, and at the foot the title of my story, "The Silent Man."

I was in the middle of my speech when Mr. Lloyd George came on to the platform, and had

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to pause until the cheers that greeted his arrival had subsided.

He began his speech by saying that on his way to the meeting he had noticed on the hoarding a life-sized portrait of the previous speaker. There was no mistaking the likeness, but what had puzzled him and almost startled him was the letterpress underneath, "The Silent Man." He had known Mr. Hocking in various parts, known him as a pacifist and as a very stubborn fighter; known him as a preacher, and as a social reformer. He had even known him as a politician. But as a silent man, no! It was the last thing anyone could accuse him of, etc., etc.

Of course the audience roared and roared again, and I laughed with the rest. His raillery was so gentle and good humoured that one felt rather complimented than otherwise.

After that I saw him frequently. During the Boer War we were ranged on the same side, and met more than once on the same platform. And after those troublous days we attended the same political meetings.

The last time I spoke to him was during the Marconi controversy. He came to the National Liberal Club to deliver—not an apologia exactly, but at any rate to make a speech in his own defence. I was chairman of the Political Committee that year and had to receive him and Lord Reading in an ante-room downstairs, and go with him on to the platform. He was ex-

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ceedingly restless and ill at ease, and he confided to me that he was always frightfully nervous before making a speech. But when once he got on to his feet and began to speak, then all nervousness fled.

I have seen him, of course, many times since, but our ways have drifted widely apart, and we have never spoken to each other again.

CHAPTER XIII

PEACE AND WAR

WHEN I left Southport I had no intention of retiring from the ministry. I believed that by being free from all pastoral and administrative work I could serve the denomination more effectively, at any rate I was willing to make the experiment.

My case, however, was without precedent, and new rules and regulations had to be framed to meet it. The Connexional Committee spent a considerable amount of time over the matter, and finally passed on to the Conference the new rules that should apply to a case like mine. These rules the Conference adopted.

When at length they came into my hands I was simply amazed. I saw that it was quite impossible for me to submit to them. A lengthy correspondence followed, but it led to nothing. The only course open to me was to quietly retire, which I did. My twenty-five years' contribution to the Superannuation Fund I handed over to the Denomination to do as they liked with. So ended my ministerial connexion. I drifted out of the Methodist ministry with as little "observation" as I had drifted into it. I continued to

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preach as before. After a few months' rest I filled up every Sunday for a year in advance, and served the churches for special occasions in all parts of the country, and was everywhere welcomed by enormous crowds. I was conscious of no change except that I had gained a larger freedom. It was true that I had no longer any right to the courtesy title of "Reverend," but as I had always declined to use it, and refused to have it on the notice board of my church, I stood in that respect exactly where I did before. Clerical attire I had always abominated, and nothing on earth would have induced me to label myself a cleric. So that both outwardly and inwardly I was just what I had always been. I was no longer the servant of an organization, and was responsible to no sect or order. I was a free man, as far as a man can be free, and so I have remained.

Two years later I was invited to be candidate for the Parliamentary division of Camborne, Cornwall, in the Liberal interest, and for two years I "nursed" the division to the best of my ability. That I won back the constituency to its old allegiance I have not the least doubt, but I was not permitted to reap what I had sown.

The South African War broke out, and, as in other matters, I asserted my right to think and act for myself. I believed then, as I believe to-day, that that war was unjust and wicked, and whatever the consequences might be I felt

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bound to protest. I did protest in a long letter to the Press. That letter brought me hundreds—I might say thousands—of letters from sympathizers in all parts of the country. The *Morning Leader* printed a great many of them.

A private meeting was called in one of the smaller rooms of Exeter Hall. A committee was formed at once. Doctor Clifford was elected President, and I was made Chairman of Committee. So began the work of the much execrated "Stop the War Committee," and I became a target for every Jingo in the land to shoot at.

A little later "The South African Conciliation Committee" was formed, of which my fellow countryman, Leonard Courtney, was one of the moving spirits. These two committees ran on almost parallel lines, and worked together in perfect harmony.

W. T. Stead joined our committee soon after it was formed, and threw himself into the work with tremendous enthusiasm. Largely at his own expense he brought out a paper called *War Against War*, which I am convinced greatly influenced public opinion in all parts of the country.

That we were in a hopeless minority goes without saying. But that has been my fate all through my life—to that end I was born, I sometimes think. The destiny that presided over my birth seems to have decided that I should find myself among the leaders of forlorn hopes, and the exponents of unpopular causes. I do not

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complain. Each man must follow the light that is in him.

Among other things the "Stop the War Committee" circularized every minister in England whose address it could find. The answers that we received were not calculated to raise our hopes; for curiously, perhaps foolishly, we did hope that the representatives of the Prince of Peace would in the main be on our side, and would be anxious to do what was possible to put an end to a devastating war. They had their reasons no doubt for the part they played. The average Englishman loves a fight to a finish, and the cleric is often a fighter.

We were not prepared however for the abuse we received. Many of the letters, if they could be printed, would make spicy reading. Some of them were almost unprintable. When a full-blooded cleric is stirred to righteous (?) anger he can say things.

The Quakers as a body were with us. In the main Unitarian ministers were on our side. A considerable number of Baptist ministers gave us their support, and a few Congregationalists. The Methodists, as a whole, ignored us.

If the peace-makers, or those who strive to be peace-makers, are blessed, the blessedness is not always apparent, or it comes in a strange guise. For many months I went in peril of my life. Two lecturing engagements I managed to fulfil, one at Maidstone (I think), the other at

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Birmingham. The lectures had nothing to do with the war, and had been arranged for months in advance, but my name had become anathema to the crowd. At the first named place before I had finished my lecture the hall was surrounded by a howling mob who waited for me to appear.

I was advised to leave by a back way before the meeting terminated. The chairman agreed to keep the audience together until I had had time to escape. A young man accompanied me across a number of fields, and in this way we reached the railway station, and I got comfortably back to town.

In Birmingham things looked more serious. One of the papers in a brief note mentioned the fact that I was announced to lecture in Birmingham that night, and it had no doubt that the Birmingham people would give me the welcome I deserved.

This direct incitement was not lost on a certain element of the people. A crowd of students invaded the gallery carrying small flags, and apparently bent on a "rag." The chairman at the outset appealed for fair play. He said that the lecture was one of a series, that it had been arranged for months previously ; it had nothing to do with the war, and he did not suppose that that subject would be alluded to.

On rising I was received with some booing and hisses, but these quickly ceased, and for an hour I talked without the least disturbance. In

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the end one of the students seconded a vote of thanks to me. He frankly admitted that he and his friends had come under a wrong impression. Still he was not sorry he had come as he had enjoyed the lecture very much.

Then one of the officials came on to the platform and whispered that the street outside was packed with people, and that the crowd was increasing every moment. Soon after we heard their voices rising into an angry roar. I was told that it would be more than my life was worth to attempt to leave by the front door. There was nothing for it but to retire to one of the vestries at the back and wait. So for an hour and a half I and two or three others waited in the vestry with the lights out. Every now and then one of them would creep back in the dark to the front of the building and listen ; but the howling still went on. The crowd evidently believed that I was still on the premises, and that I was bound to appear sooner or later. There was no way out at the back except over a high wall. I examined this as well as I could in the dark, and then determined to make the attempt. Getting on to the back of one of my friends I reached the top without difficulty, and dropped softly on to a heap of rubbish on the other side. Then I made my way through a long garden and ultimately reached a narrow street. The crowd was still howling and shouting, but this no longer troubled me. After walking a considerable distance I

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reached one of the main thoroughfares where I was fortunate in finding an empty cab, and so reached the Midland Hotel a little before midnight.

A few weeks later Mr. Lloyd George had a much more trying experience in the same city. Birmingham can be very intolerant of people whose opinions it dislikes.

My public engagements came to a sudden end, not because I was afraid, but because I was no longer wanted. All my Sundays were booked months ahead, and I had lecturing engagements in all parts of the country, but the boycott dropped down like a shutter. Letters reached me in a steady stream from church officials, and the secretaries of literary societies cancelling the engagements. Many of these letters were couched in anything but friendly terms. For once I was permitted to see myself as others saw me, and the picture was by no means flattering. One minister was good enough to tell me on a post card that I ought to be tied to a cart-tail and whipped through the streets of London. If postmen ever take the trouble to read post cards those who delivered my mail must have been greatly entertained, perhaps a little shocked.

A little later my publisher became alarmed. Booksellers all over the country were refusing to stock my books or allow them a place in their shop windows. It looked as if the British Public meant to starve me into repentance.

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Politically I was almost as much an outcast as religiously. In the Camborne Division feeling ran high, and I was advised not to show my face in Cornwall again if I valued my life.

For some time I was in doubt as to the best course to take. I had been nursing the constituency for a couple of years, and did not relish the idea of running away from the fight. On the other hand I had to consider the interests of the party. It was not my place to jeopardise the seat if it could be avoided. In the end I went down to the House of Commons and had a chat with Mr. Herbert Gladstone, who was Chief Whip. He refused, however, to advise me one way or another. Nevertheless, I got the impression from our talk that he would be pleased, in the interests of the party, if I retired in favour of someone who had taken no active part in opposition to the war.

A day or two later I wrote a letter to the chairman of my committee resigning my candidature. So ended my first attempt to get into Parliament. Curiously my old friend Sir Wilfrid Lawson, who was an out and out "Pro-Boer," and who was with me on the platform of Exeter Hall when our meeting was stormed by an angry crowd and broken up, was returned as member for Camborne on the death of Mr. W. S. Caine a few years later. So the wheel had come round full circle. It is not in the nature of English people to keep their anger for ever. They can

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hate as well as anybody when the fight is on, but when it is over they forget and forgive.

One little incident connected with those days I cannot forbear to mention. On the night after the the relief of Mafeking an enormous crowd gathered in front of my house. After a pause of a few minutes it passed further along the road and proceeded to wreck a house on the opposite side. The intention was to wreck my house. I was the hated person who needed to be taught a lesson. But there appeared to be some doubt as to whether I lived at Number 10 or Number 11. Finally it was decided that I lived at Number 11, and so my good friend and neighbour, Mr. James, received the attention that was intended for me.

Later a story appeared in the newspapers that my youngest boy Vivian, then about ten or eleven years of age, had hung a flag out of his bedroom window, and that the crowd, seeing the flag, decided that this could not be the house of the notorious Pro-Boer, and so passed on leaving me in peace.

This story was copied into papers all over the world. It was used as a text for Sunday-school addresses. It was trotted out in speeches and sermons. The moral of course was excellent :— the good little boy who saved his wicked father's house from destruction. The story came back to me through the Press-cutting agencies, and the kind attention of friends, from New Zealand and

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Australia and Canada and the United States, until I was weary of the sight of it.

And yet there were times when I almost wished it were true. It was such a nice little story, and the moral was so excellent that it seemed a pity that it had no foundation in fact. Truth, however, is merciless. And yet as a moral anecdote it no doubt answered its purpose just as well as if it had been literally true.

Several years later when old animosities had been forgotten and the world was at peace, I decided to write a story with war as its central theme, to consider the whole question from the standpoint of the Christian ethic. Naturally I drew on my own experience during the South African War. I set out what seemed to me the Christian ideal. I built up my story as faithfully and truthfully as I knew how.

When it was completed I took it to an editor who had published a dozen of my stories in serial form. He read it and returned it. It would not do he told me. It was controversial. Opinion was divided. It might, and possibly would, stir up ill-feeling.

I then submitted it to other editors who had serialized my stories but with the same result. Then I decided to publish it at once in book form, but to my surprise the publishers took the same view as the editors. One publisher's reader, a well-known literary man, stated the matter to me with brutal frankness. "My dear Hocking,"

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he said, "the public doesn't care a damn about peace; least of all the religious public." I was convinced that he was wrong, but what could I do?

"War," he went on half cynically, half seriously, "has become a Christian institution. The church has given it its blessing a thousand times. We go into it with prayer and psalm singing. We never have a doubt that we are doing God's will in butchering the enemy. Hence what is the use of flying in the face of public opinion?"

"You think the book wouldn't sell?" I questioned.

"Sure of it. It is on that ground I have turned it down."

I persevered for some time, and then pushed the manuscript into a cupboard and tried to forget it. It was a new experience, and not a pleasant one. I had published at least thirty volumes of various sorts, and never before had had one rejected. But for this poor bantling which I named "Sword and Cross" there was no welcome; no one would give it house room.

Two or three years later I attended a literary gathering at the Lyceum Club. The room was full of writing people of both sexes, and there was a general talk on questions affecting the profession of letters. Mr. Zangwill, if I remember aright, was called to the chair, and he set the ball a-rolling in a somewhat satirical speech.

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A number of well-known authors expressed the view that writers should consider only their art ; in other words they should write to please themselves ; that if they considered the public, their work would suffer, with a good deal more to the same effect.

When at length the chairman called on me I told the story of my rejected manuscript. I had written to please myself, and the result was nobody would publish my book.

The story found its way into the papers the following day, and a few days later I got a letter from Mr. Stanley Paul asking to be allowed to look at the manuscript. So I fished the thing out from its hiding-place and sent it off by post.

Some time later Mr. Paul wrote offering to publish the book on the usual terms. Needless to say I closed with the offer, and in the late spring of 1914 it was published with a foreword in which I explained its origin, and its history to date.

To my surprise the book was exceptionally well reviewed by the critics. A few of them were almost extravagant in their praise. The first edition went off rapidly. A second edition was on the point of going to press when the Great War broke out, and my poor bantling, after its brief existence, expired without a struggle.

Had it been in praise of war I have little doubt it would have lived and flourished, but

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being in praise of peace it had no chance. The war atmosphere choked out its feeble life and only its author lamented its early death.

While the South African War was still raging the National Council of Free Churches held its Annual Meeting in Sheffield, and I was invited, greatly to my surprise, to address the gathering on a selected topic. There was a crowded house when I rose to speak, and I had a somewhat mixed reception. This did not surprise me, though it made me excessively nervous. Moreover, I had got out of the way of public speaking. For months past the pulpits and platforms of the country had been closed against me. The pages of my diary had the word "cancelled" written all over them.

I suppose every public speaker is sensitive to what is termed "atmosphere," and I am no exception to the rule. For a few minutes I felt as though it would be impossible to go on. Then I became conscious of a number of smiling and friendly faces in the crowd. Later a ringing cheer greeted some remark I made. The atmosphere changed as if by magic. My nervousness evaporated, and I was able to plough my way to the end with ease.

When I sat down I realized that I had still troops of friends and well-wishers, and that I was not so much alone as I had imagined. This was further evidenced two days later, when on the result of the ballot being announced, I dis-

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covered that I had been elected on the Executive Committee.

This came as a great surprise to me for I was unaware of the fact that I had been nominated. Every year since then I have been elected as a lay member of the committee, and have been present at all its important deliberations. If, however, majorities are always in the right, then I have been again and again in the wrong, perhaps more often in the wrong than in the right. And yet in looking back I would not, if I could, reverse any vote that I have given.

I am quite aware that there is no particular virtue in consistency. A man who never changes is, generally speaking, a fossil in whom there is no sap of life. Growth implies change. But change by no means postulates growth. I have resisted many changes because in my judgment they have been changes for the worse, steps backward instead of forward.

I hate fighting, and yet all my life I have been called upon to fight. If I could have compromised with conscience I should have been saved from much material loss and perhaps have found the ease and quietness that I love.

CHAPTER XIV

MINISTERS AND LAYMEN

I HAVE already spoken of several distinguished Nonconformist ministers whom it has been my privilege to know. When I became a member of the General Committee of the National Council of Free Churches I was brought into more or less intimate contact with many others whom I had known only by repute.

Dr. McKennel of Bowden, half Cornish and half Scotch, a man of fine presence, a wise councillor, and a most able administrator.

Berry, of Wolverhampton, a fine debater and an able preacher. Berry always carried himself as a man who feared nothing. Rather below the medium height and squarely built, brimful of humour and yet intensely in earnest.

Hugh Price Hughes. A cleric to his finger tips, and an emphatic believer in the ministerial order. Dogmatic and sometimes overbearing. A fine platform speaker, and a fearless advocate of what he believed to be right; lacking somewhat in sympathy, and in the saving grace of humour; but his driving force was tremendous.

Robert Horton, gentle and suave, with a soft voice and a persuasive manner. He carried about

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with him an air of detachment as though he lived on a higher plane than that of most of his fellows. A saintly man no doubt, but dwelling too much apart from the rough and tumble of the world.

Charles Brown. A man whose spirit contradicts his appearance. A melancholy looking man, with a sad face, and dreamy pathetic eyes, yet abounding in good humour, and a delightful companion. A really great preacher with the vision of a seer.

J. H. Jowett. A charming personality, whom to know is to love. As a preacher he has a niche all to himself; a wizard with words. A voice of exceeding richness and beauty, and a style both forceful and persuasive. He is a master of the wooing note, and it is sheer delight to listen to him. I fancy that Jowett has never made an enemy, nor is he ever likely to make one.

Monro Gibson. A man with a happy face and a delightful smile; squarely built and full of vigour; sound in judgment, keen in debate, wise in administration. A man without side or pretentiousness. Once on the platform with Dr. Parker he spoke of himself as "a humble Presbyterian." When Parker rose to speak he said: "My friend Gibson spoke of himself as a humble Presbyterian, a *humble* Presbyterian! When I heard that word I said within me, 'Lo! I will turn aside and see this great sight!'"

Silvester Horne! But how can I write of Silvester? He was as a brother to me, and I loved him as I have loved few men. He was the

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embodiment of the spirit of youth, and he carried that spirit to the last. A man's man and a gentleman. Great at games and great on the platform, great as a friend, and great as a preacher. I do not expect to see his like again.

F. B. Meyer. An elusive personality. Restless as the sea; stubborn rather than strong, abounding in sympathy, and one of the hardest workers I have ever met.

Scott Lidgett. A many-sided man, full of sound sense, but an uninspiring speaker. Is on more committees, I should think, than any other man in London.

T. Guttery, an eloquent son of an eloquent father; one of the most trenchant platform speakers that Methodism has produced.

J. H. Shakespeare, the autocrat and legislator of the Baptist denomination.

And last, and in many respects greatest of all, John Clifford. Bold as a lion, and yet tender as a woman. A born fighter with the heart of a child. Deeply religious, and yet intensely practical. The embodiment of sanctified common sense.

These and many others, such as Garvie and Forsyth and Bernard Snell and Armstrong and Hooper and Yates and Greenland and Nightingale and Phillips and F. C. Spurr and Griffith Jones, I have seen at close quarters. All great men in different ways, and in varying degrees. Men of heart and men of brain, intellectuals and

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enthusiasts, scholars and saints, statesmen and administrators. Each filling his particular niche and each supplying something that the others lacked. None of them faultless, but all of them sincere. With many of them I have been in constant agreement, others I have consistently opposed. But while opinions clash friendship abides. If we cannot always agree we can at least agree to differ.

I have also been brought from time to time into more or less intimate contact with some of the dignitaries and clergy of the Church of England, such as the Bishop of London and the Dean of St. Paul's, Sharp, the Vicar of Ealing, and Dr. Morrison, the Bishops of Birmingham and Kensington, Bishop Weldon and Dr. Percival the late Bishop of Hereford, Bishop Gore and many others.

I remember addressing a crowded meeting in the Colston Hall, Bristol. The other speakers were Bishop Percival and a Labour M.P. from the north. Dr. Percival as everyone knows was a saintly man not given to mirth or frivolity. Until that evening I had never seen him laugh in a really hearty fashion. The Labour M.P. in the course of his speech told a story, but what it was intended to illustrate I have never been able to discover.

"A friend of mine," he said, "a joiner by trade, applied to a master builder for a job.

"What can you do?' the employer asked.

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“ ‘Anything,’ was the reply. ‘There is nothing in the joinery line that I can’t do.’

“ ‘Can you make a Venetian blind?’ the employer questioned.

“ ‘Of course I can,’ was the reply.

“ ‘How would you go about it?’

“ ‘I would punch his blooming eyes out,’ was the reply.”

Whether it was the unexpectedness of the answer or the absurdity of the story as an illustration, I don’t know. Anyhow the Bishop, who was sitting next to me, gave a sudden guffaw, and nearly rolled off his chair, and for several minutes he almost rocked with laughter.

Scratch a Russian, they say, and you find a Tartar, and scratch a bishop or a dean, and you find an ordinary human being. I have sometimes wondered if clerical attire was invented in order to disguise the human or to convey the impression that a parson was a human being plus something else, some quality or virtue that ordinary individuals did not possess. If so, such camouflage is no longer necessary for no one is taken in by it. No man to-day, whether lay or clerical, is judged by his clothes. Charles Kingsley was not the less great because he wore a red tie, and Spurgeon and Parker would not have been any more mighty as preachers if they had dressed in clerical attire.

I remember lunching with the Dean of Peterborough in his big house in the shadow of the cathedral, and I was greatly surprised at finding

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him in an ordinary lounge suit with a sailor knot tie. I felt at home with him at once. We met as it were on common ground. There was no ecclesiastical curtain between us. And in this unclerical attire he went with me to the meeting I was to address, and sat next the Bishop who occupied the chair and endured patiently my fifty minutes' talk.

In my intercourse with episcopalians I have been singularly fortunate. I have found them in the main broad-minded and friendly, quite ready to look at questions from my point of view and manifesting no sign of intolerance.

Of course the difference between state-churchism and free-churchism is fundamental. What is sacrosanct to the one is almost anathema to the other, but that is no reason why the two wings of the same army may not work together in perfect accord on the vast field of common ground.

Of the distinguished and great-hearted laymen in the various churches I have known many, and it has been a joy and an inspiration to work with them. The Rowntrees of York and the Turners of Rochdale, Percy Bunting and William Mallinson, George Cadbury and Storrs Fry, James Carmichael and Henry Holloway, Robert Perks and W. P. Hartley, H. O. Serpell and Gilbert Coleridge, Ferens and Walter Essex, Albert and Evan Spicer, Compton Rickett and Horace Marshall.

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Some of them have gone over to the great majority, but most of them still remain, and a few of them I reckon among my dearest friends. Quite a number of them have received honours from the King, and Horace Marshall has been made a peer, but it has not lessened their interest in good works, nor abated their zeal for the Lord's House.

Before passing from the Free Church Council I must make reference to Thomas Law, its first organizing secretary, through whose untiring labours it was raised to the highest point of influence it has ever reached.

Law was not a great preacher, nor a great platform speaker, but his gift for organization amounted to genius. He made enemies no doubt, that was almost inevitable in the position he occupied. I travelled with him all over the country while he was consolidating his work. He was a constant visitor at my house, for we were near neighbours. In nearly all his undertakings he came to me for counsel, hence I had abundant opportunity of judging his worth. He had his faults, as we all have, but no vices as far as I could discover. Toward the end of his life he was cruelly maligned, and died tragically under a cloud.

In travelling up and down the country I frequently came into contact with great men, able and scholarly preachers, who were never

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heard of outside the little circle in which they moved, and I sometimes wondered why it was that these choice spirits never emerged out of their obscurity. Did they lack push and self-assertion, or did opportunity pass them by? There is a common belief that worth and merit always come to the top, and that greatness creates its own opportunity. But I am inclined to dispute that dogma. There seems no reason in the world why some men should occupy the positions they do, while far abler men live and die in obscurity. Personally I believe in luck. To some men the chance comes and they seize it. To other men the chance never comes. Some men, no doubt, owe their position to merit, others to favour and others to sheer good fortune. I have seen men rise in their professions with almost incredible rapidity. I have known men make vast fortunes in half a dozen years, and I have known men quite as capable and quite as persevering who never had a chance, and have lived and died in obscurity and in comparative poverty.

In looking back over a long life it is interesting to trace the careers of men and women who started life about the time I did or a few years later. Some who, apparently, were the best equipped have failed, and others who gave but little promise at the beginning have succeeded in remarkable ways.

I recall a young fellow who came to me in Manchester from a remote Lincolnshire village,

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who a few years later was head of the biggest insurance society in Great Britain. Another, a delicate-looking lad, who sought me out in the vestry one evening, after I had given a lecture in a country town, and who to-day is one of the most successful editors in London. A third, without money or influence, who is now a member of Parliament. A fourth, a fair-haired young man, who died a few years since a peer and a millionaire. And so I might go on. And as with men, so with women. One of the brightest girl teachers in my Sunday-school is to-day the wife of the Lord Chief Justice, and fills her high position with grace and distinction. So fortune scatters her gifts on whom she will, the rest she passes by. And yet it may be that in the things that make life worth while, those who dwell in the quiet places have the best of it. There is very little that is satisfying in riches or rank, fame or power. A very rich man said to me a few years ago, "Beyond a couple of thousand a year riches can give a man nothing." Some of the happiest people I have known had less than five hundred a year. They had learned the lesson of contentment, and never hankered after wealth or notoriety.

I sometimes dream that Heaven will be
A green place and an orchard tree
And one sweet angel known to me

wrote some poet whose name I have forgotten,
but he had surely looked into the heart of things.

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“I have learned in whatsoever state I am therewith to be content,” wrote the Apostle Paul, and in learning that lesson he had found the secret of true blessedness.

So with those able ministers of whom I have spoken who lived in comparative obscurity. It may be they needed no commiseration. Had they been dragged into the limelight it is possible they would have been no happier, and what is more to the point, no more useful.

Charles Williams of Accrington was a great man, an able preacher and a brilliant platform speaker, and yet outside his own denomination his name was almost unknown. He was quite content to spend his days in a smoky Lancashire town.

Then there was J. Brown of Northampton. I never heard of him outside his own county. In his own town and shire he was looked upon as a sort of Nonconformist bishop. A fine upstanding man with a strong face and a merry twinkle in his eyes. Greatly loved by his own people, and quite content to live and die amongst them.

Brown had gathered during his long life a wonderful fund of stories which he told with great gusto. One story he told me which he had from the lips of Sir Morton Peto.

Peto was a great railway contractor, and was deeply interested in the social and spiritual welfare of the navvies he employed. He erected wooden camps for their accommodation with

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bunk-houses, dining room, cook-house, and a lecture hall. He also paid a minister to preach and lecture to them. One evening the minister took for his text, "For your adversary the devil as a roaring lion walketh about seeking whom he may devour," and he drew a graphic and rather terrifying picture of the activities of his satanic majesty, and what would happen to them if the devil got hold of them. The men looked scared, and put their pipes into their pockets.

Thinking perhaps he had rather overdone the thing, he modified the picture somewhat by telling them that though the devil was so terribly fierce he was chained.

The men began to look cheerful again, and felt once more in their pockets for their pipes.

"Ah, but you must not forget," said the minister, seeing their cheerful looks, "that though he is chained the chain is long enough to reach all round the world."

Then came a raucous voice from the back of the hall.

"The blighter might as well be loose, guv'ner!"

Another story I recall was of a little girl, who, returning from school, was deeply interested in watching some dustmen tipping the bins into a deep cart. The man inside after his bins were emptied threw them over the side of the cart, when they were caught by the man outside.

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While the little girl was looking on one of these empty bins was tumbled out and fell over the head of the man outside like an extinguisher, smothering him with dust and grit.

When he had extricated himself with some difficulty the little girl hurried home and told her mother what she had seen.

"I suppose the man was terribly angry?" said the mother.

"Oh no," said the little girl. "He just sat down and told God all about it."

In speaking of distinguished Free Church ministers I have so far made no reference to R. J. Campbell, whose meteoric flight has carried him outside the orbit of nonconformity.

My first meeting with Mr. Campbell was in his church at Brighton, where I had arranged to give a lecture. After that I preached for him on several occasions. In these early days of his ministry we seemed to have a good deal in common. I knew his parents—his father being a Methodist minister—and from them I heard a good deal of R. J. Naturally they were very proud of their son.

In the course of many long talks we had together I think he told me the full story of his spiritual pilgrimage up to that point, and it was a story that did him great credit. In going to Oxford it was with the intention of taking Orders so that he might qualify for a mastership at one of our great public schools.

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When it came to the point of ordination, however, he drew back. Intellectually he felt he could not assent to some of the positions taken up by the Church. It was a hard fight. His whole career was at stake. The sacrifice seemed enormous. In the end, however, conviction triumphed; he made the sacrifice. Personally I honour him for it, though unwittingly in making it he discovered his true vocation.

After he came to London I saw less and less of him. For some reason he never invited me to occupy his pulpit. I think some of my publicly expressed opinions displeased him.

I remember going to Woodford to hear him preach in connexion with the laying of the foundation stone of my brother's new church. Instead of taking a text he drew a printed article of mine from his pocket and proceeded to pull it to pieces.

I confess I listened with considerable surprise. Not that I objected to criticism, but the whole thing seemed so uncalled-for and out of place. My opinions were nothing to the people of Woodford, and I don't suppose they cared two straws what I believed or didn't believe. I was not their minister.

I took no part in the controversy that followed the publication of his "New Theology." I read the book, but was not greatly interested. There was very little in it that was new, and taken as a whole it was an ill-digested performance. It

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represented a phase through which most theological thinkers pass sooner or later, and that is about all that can be said of it.

From this point Mr. Campbell began to double back on his tracks, and in a comparatively short time we find him where he was in his pre-Oxford days. He denies what for so long he had accepted and accepts what he had denied. He even turns his back on his own theological system.

I am not blaming him. As I have said before there is no particular virtue in consistency. We can only follow such light as we have. Mr. Campbell will always be an interesting personality, but never a very safe guide.

CHAPTER XV

POLITICIANS

TOWARD the end of the year 1903 I consented to contest Mid Bucks in the Liberal interest. It implied of course great temerity on my part, but I was more interested in politics than anxious to get a seat in the House of Commons. I think that no one really believed that the division could be won, and yet the party was very anxious that it should not be allowed to go by default, and I was asked to step into the breach and do my best to keep the flag flying.

From that time until 1910 I was in the thick of politics, and on the whole I had an enjoyable time. I was under no illusions about Mid Bucks. Politically the Honourable Walter Rothschild was not a formidable opponent. He was much more interested in natural history than in political discussions. As a matter of fact politics count for little with the bulk of electors in that particular part of Buckinghamshire. If a Rothschild is a candidate—it does not matter what his politics happen to be—he will be returned.

The Rothschilds never used any direct influence against me. They were always scrupulously fair. Walter was a most courteous op-

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ponent. He never indulged in personalities, and when we met from time to time he was most friendly and pleasant. Hence, except for the last week when the mob got out of hand and broke up most of our meetings, I carry with me the pleasantest memories of the time I spent in that delightful county.

The Earl of Buckinghamshire was my chairman, and he granted me the free use of Hampden House when I was in that part of the division. Indeed, no people could be kinder than he and the countess, and I shall always cherish for them the warmest regard.

My excursion into politics not only brought me new experiences but made me a host of new friends. Members of Parliament and candidates came readily to help me at my meetings, and I returned the compliment and visited many parts of the country I had never seen or indeed heard of before.

Everything was plain sailing until Parliament dissolved in 1906, and the date of the General Election was fixed. Then things began to get lively. There had been trifling mishaps of course, ludicrous mistakes made, speakers appearing the day after the meeting, arguments with fisticuffs; but these things were all in the day's work.

Once I remember getting lost. It was a wide division somewhere in Wiltshire. The candidate and myself drove in a closed landau some dozen

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miles to an outlying village. We had a couple of good horses, and covered the ground easily and pleasantly. We had an excellent meeting, for my friend, who was a considerable landowner in the county, was very popular.

On leaving the village on our return journey the coachman took the wrong turn, and did not discover his mistake until he had gone several miles. The night was intensely dark and bitterly cold and there was not a light to be discerned in any direction nor a solitary traveller of whom we might inquire the way. My friend got out and held a consultation with the coachman, after which we drove on again. Considerably later we pulled up at the junction of several roads, and the coachman with considerable difficulty climbed the guide post and with the aid of matches tried to decipher the names. This proved beyond his powers. The lettering had been practically obliterated. My friend and his coachman making a guess at it turned to the right, and for miles we travelled across what might be a park or a common. It was impossible to tell in the darkness. About midnight we reached a small village or hamlet which was in complete darkness, except for one solitary light in an upstairs window.

Pulling up in front of the cottage the coachman flicked the glass with his whip. A tousled head appeared at length. "What the devil did we want?"

Could he tell us where we were?

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He gave the name of the village and my friend informed me that we were a good deal farther from home than when we left the place of the meeting ; also that we were in a part of the country that was entirely strange to him.

The villager gave us some general directions, and we started off again.

After what seemed to be an interminable length of time we reached another village which was in complete darkness. But we were getting desperate, and in our efforts to awaken one household we awoke almost the entire population. We had to listen to a good deal of uncomplimentary language, also to the fact that at the previous village we had been given a wrong direction.

To make a long story short we arrived home a little after three in the morning, the horses exhausted and covered with lather, the coachman almost frozen, and my friend and myself hungry and tired and cold.

Electioneering in a wide county constituency has no doubt certain disadvantages.

The first occasion on which I met Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman was at the house of Lord Carrington (now the Marquis of Lincolnshire), near High Wycombe. After that I met him frequently at private dinners given by members of Parliament and parliamentary candidates. C.-B. was naturally a much sought after guest by people who were anxious to make their way in the political

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world. If he was bored by those constant dinner parties he gave no sign of it. He came up smiling on every occasion on which I met him. He was not a great talker at such times, but an excellent listener. He seemed far more ready to listen to the opinions of other people than to give expression to his own. He was a true Scotsman in that respect, but not a dour Scotsman. He was always genial, and he had a fund of excellent stories with which to lighten any occasion.

On a few occasions I met him in his own house in Grosvenor Place, and the more I saw of him the more I admired him. This was no doubt partly due to the fact that he seemed to go out of his way to make himself friendly. He took an interest in me and in my work, and naturally our hearts go out to people who are kind to us. But apart from that, there was something about C.-B. that commanded one's admiration and respect. He was so straight, so unpretentious, so sincere. I never met a man more free from cant and "side" and humbug. Shrewd, cautious, observant, far-seeing, but without a trace of pretentiousness or bombast, he filled the high position to which he was called with dignity and courage, and withal a beautiful simplicity.

I never realized the full measure of the interest he took in me until the year of his death.

One morning I got a letter from Mr. Whiteley, the Chief Whip, asking me to call at Downing Street as he wished to see me.

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On my being shown into his room he said that he had written at the Prime Minister's request. C.-B. was unfortunately too ill to see me, indeed he was very seriously ill, but he (Mr. Whiteley) had been commissioned to put the matter through.

"Is there likely to be a by-election?" I questioned, thinking that I was wanted to contest some division.

"Oh no," was the reply. "It has nothing to do with any election. The fact is C.-B. has decided to put your name on the next Honours List, and so we want a few particulars, etc., etc."

Naturally I was greatly surprised, and asked for the reason why this great compliment was being paid, pointing out that there were men who had done far more for the party than I had ever done or was likely to do.

"Oh, it is not on party or political grounds at all," Mr. Whiteley replied. "You write books, don't you?"

"Of a sort," I said. "One has to earn a living somehow, you know."

"Well, I know nothing about it," he laughed. "I have never read one of them, but C.-B. thinks you have done more in providing healthy fiction for the young people of the country than any other man, and it is on that ground——"

"If the Prime Minister thinks that," I replied, "I am bound to say I feel highly honoured."

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I still feel the same. In my long life no greater compliment has been paid me.

A few weeks later C.-B. died, mourned by all parties, and Mr. Asquith became Prime Minister.

That year I spent a couple of months in Switzerland with my family. It was in Vevey that I picked up a copy of *The Times* containing the Honours List. Naturally I looked down the columns with considerable curiosity, but quickly discovered that my name was not there.

Later in the year I was walking along Parliament Street one afternoon when I felt a hand laid on my shoulder, and turning, encountered the ruddy and genial face of the late Chief Whip.

"Hello, Mr. Whiteley," I said, then paused. "Beg pardon," I went on. "But you have changed your name since last I saw you, I understand."

"That is so," he laughed. "They have kicked me up into the House of Lords. But I want to say I am awfully sorry your name did not go through. I did my best, but you see I was no longer Whip. And the new Prime Minister has friends of his own whom no doubt he thought more deserving."

"Naturally," I replied.

"I can only express my regrets," he continued.

"Don't worry," I replied. "I have not lost a minute's sleep over it."

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So ended that brief episode in my busy and unexciting life.

I saw Mr. Asquith from time to time, and found him always pleasant and friendly ; but I never got on anything like terms of intimacy with him. I was always invited to the big party gatherings whether at Downing Street or at the Foreign Office, and now and then as a member of some deputation had the privilege of addressing him and replying to his questions. We still meet occasionally, and shake hands and pass the time of day, but beyond that nothing.

I heard him speak first in Nottingham, when he was a comparatively young man and almost unknown. His speech was a surprise to most people, and the question heard on all hands was " Who is he ? "

From that day to this I have watched his career with great interest, and I have never had occasion to change my first impression of him. He may lack some of the qualities of a popular leader. He does not easily " catch fire." At times he seems cold and passionless. He is severely logical. But history will assuredly place him in the line of great statesmen. Calm, wise, steadfast, far-seeing, loyal to his friends, magnanimous toward his foes, never hurried, never bitter, never impatient, and never in retreat. With unfaltering courage he has pursued his way in fair weather and in foul. He has never trimmed his sails to catch the popular breeze, never been

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an opportunist. Whether we agree with him or disagree, every fair-minded man must admit that he has been unflinchingly loyal to those great principles which have been the guiding star of his life.

I have shaken hands with Mr. Balfour I think twice. I have heard him speak many times. I have disagreed with him constantly. I have admired him consistently. A. J. B. is one of England's great men, who should have remained plain "mister."

Walter Runciman is a far abler man than many people credit him with being. I think his youthful appearance has made against him. He is charming in his own house. I remember dining with him one evening when he was Minister of Education. A number of educational authorities sat round his table, and I had a most interesting time of it. Runciman called upon me to set the ball a-rolling. I think he knew where I stood, and wished to have the secular point of view stated at the outset. Naturally I made the most of my opportunity. I knew, of course, that I was in a hopeless minority, but that is my native element. Anyhow we had a great evening, and when we left, rather late, I fancy that each of us was convinced that his was the only way of settling the educational problem.

I always had a great liking for "Lulu" Harcourt. I made his acquaintance at the be-

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ginning of my brief political career, and he proved a good friend to me in many ways. About a year before his death he told me a good story of a gentleman, who hailed from a remote part of the Empire, who was granted a peerage. When it came to the question of title he decided on "Nelson." He thought Lord Nelson would sound very well.

When it was delicately hinted to him that Lord Nelson was a national hero, that his monument stood in Trafalgar Square, and that a certain amount of confusion might be caused, he agreed to reconsider the matter.

His next decision was almost as embarrassing. There was a village of the name of Chatham not far from the home of his boyhood. He would be known as Lord Chatham.

Again it was hinted that it might be inadvisable, etc., etc. So he consented to have another try.

The title he ultimately selected I am not going to reveal.

This business of titles is apt to be confusing. Quite a number of excellent men have sunk their identity under names that are unfamiliar. Constantly, in reading the papers, I am pulled up suddenly. "Lord Thingamy," I say to myself, "Who is he? Or who *was* he?" and I have to hunt up "Debrett" or "Who's Who" or the "Daily Mail Year Book."

If commoners, when they are made barons

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or viscounts, would stick to their familiar surnames it would save a lot of confusion. In the case of a number of modern peerages, of course, it doesn't matter in the least. They were nobodies before they were made peers, and they are nobodies still.

Of distinguished politicians I have known, few stand higher in my estimation than Leonard Courtney. I was glad he did not change his name when he became a peer. It was an honoured name to start with, and he added lustre to it by his fine spirit and public service. Cornwall has not produced too many distinguished men and when one does appear we, as Cornishmen, like to do him honour. I was not by any means always in agreement with him, and in talks at his house in Cheyne Walk and elsewhere we hammered out our differences. And yet those differences were not so much in principles as in the application of them. We worked in our different ways for the same things, strove for the same ends. He was a fine debater, clear, logical, and scrupulously fair to his opponents. His style was dignified, and now and then he rose to heights of real eloquence. I think he would have been made Speaker of the House of Commons, but his sight failed him during the later years of his life.

The last time I met him I chaffed him on being a true Conservative.

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"How?" he questioned with a smile.

"You never change the colour of your waistcoat," I replied.

"And you never shave," he laughed.

So I suppose the honours were even.

Whether in the House of Commons or in the House of Lords he was faithful to his buff waistcoat. It was characteristic of the man; he never deserted his friends.

I knew Winston Churchill before he adopted politics as a profession. I met him first at the Whitefriars Club, and conceived a great liking for him. He was so boyish, so frank, so genial, and though but a young man he had accomplished so much. His achievements would have done credit to a man twice his age. Had he adopted literature as a profession he would without doubt have won great distinction. His biography of his father is almost perfect in its way, filial but never fulsome, generous but always discriminating. He has a true ear for the music of words, and a true sense of their value. His style is direct and yet ornate, lucid and yet picturesque. These qualities come out with special clearness in his speeches.

Since he entered politics I have watched his career with great interest, and whilst I have been opposed to him again and again, and frequently doubted the soundness of his judgment, I have always retained my liking for the man.

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He never spares himself. His capacity for work is enormous, his versatility remarkable, and his energy apparently inexhaustible.

For all round ability he is in my judgment one of the biggest men in the House of Commons, and is bound to play a great part in the life of the nation. I admire his genius, his daring, his versatility, and yet I am often afraid for him. When a big man makes mistakes they are generally big mistakes. He has in a marked degree the defects of his excellences, and these defects have a habit now and then of pushing their way to the front. Whether in the future I agree with him or disagree, I know I shall continue to like him because of the good that is in him.

John Simon is another man whose career I have found interesting to watch. I have known him for a good many years now. I knew his father, and from the father's lips heard a good deal concerning the early life of his son. I remember sitting one day in the Strangers' Gallery of the House of Commons by the father's side while the son was speaking on the floor. It was interesting to watch the older man's face. I could enter fully into his feelings, and I shared many of his emotions; for I hoped then that I should live to see one of my own sons addressing the House—a hope alas that death has for ever destroyed.

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Sir John Simon has most of the qualities that go to the making of a great statesman. He has learning, he has vision, he has courage, and he has in a remarkable degree the gift of speech. More than all he has character. In many ways he resembles Mr. Asquith. He has the same keen analytical mind, the same sense of the value of words, the same apparent aloofness, the same surface coldness. With a little more fire and passion he would make a great leader.

John Burns seems to me like a river that has burst its banks and has lost itself in the desert sands. For many years now his life apparently has been running to waste; not, I think, through any fault of his own. Circumstances have been too strong for him. He has been true to himself, to his deepest convictions, and he has had, like many another man, to pay the penalty. Opportunism, which has become so fashionable, forms no part of his political creed. He never waits to see which way the cat jumps, never trims.

"One who never turned his back but marched breast forward," I often meet Burns, and never without regret that his undoubted abilities are for the present lost to the nation.

And what shall I say more of politicians? For the time would fail me to tell of J. M. Robertson, and the late Llewellyn Williams, and Ellis Griffiths, and Doctor "Mac" and Hamar Greenwood and many others.

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A good many years ago now, Hamar Greenwood and I were waiting late one evening at a suburban station for a train to take us back to town.

“ I shall never marry,” he said to me with emphasis in reply to some chaff of mine. “ I have made politics my bride.”

Not so very long after he sent me an invitation to his wedding !

CHAPTER XVI

CRITICS, CARICATURISTS AND HUMORISTS

SOON after settling in London Sir Walter Besant asked me to come on to the committee of the Atlantic Union. This organization was established for the purpose of giving a hand of welcome to visitors from beyond the seas. People were constantly arriving in London from the outposts of the Empire. They came many of them on sentimental grounds. They wanted to see the "Old Country," the home of their fathers, and when they arrived they found themselves strangers in a strange land. They knew no one. No one took any interest in them.

Besant, with his big heart and abounding sympathy, conceived the idea of establishing a central meeting place for them. People who arrived from Australia or New Zealand or Canada with a note of introduction to the Atlantic Union were at once welcomed. They were introduced to people from their own countries. Members of the Union were ready to show them places of interest. At homes and garden parties were arranged to which they were invited. Lectures and entertainments were given, and in this way they were made to feel that they were not regarded

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with indifference, not looked upon as aliens and strangers, but welcomed as friends and kindred ; and in this way the bonds of empire were drawn more closely together.

For many years the Atlantic Union did a work the value of which cannot be estimated. After Sir Walter's death Mr. Driffield Hawkin undertook the work of organizing secretary, and threw himself heart and soul into the enterprise.

Then a new organization was established on similar lines, but on a somewhat wider basis, with Mr. Evelyn Wrench as its moving spirit. Mr. Taft became President of the American section, and Mr. Balfour of the British. A little later the two organizations amalgamated under the name of "The English-Speaking Union," and I became one of its Vice-Presidents.

The English-Speaking Union is growing rapidly on both sides of the Atlantic, and is doing particularly good work in drawing England and the United States more closely together.

London is a place where no man is allowed to rust out if he has any desire to be of service to his fellows. I soon found myself on as many committees as I could possibly attend.

Mr. Arthur Spurgeon (now Sir Arthur), who was then literary manager of the National Press Agency, induced me to contribute a weekly syndicated article which appeared in the provincial Press under the title of "For a Quiet Hour." I was doubtful at first if I could keep it up. My

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long experience in public speaking enabled me to dictate with comparative ease; the difficulty was in finding a fresh topic every week, particularly as politics had to be rigidly excluded. However I managed it for six or seven years. Then press of other work coupled with a bad attack of influenza compelled me to give it up.

Mr. Arthur Fifield made a selection from these articles which he published in a thin volume under the title of "Chapters in Democratic Christianity." A second selection was made by Mr. J. A. Hamerton and published by Partridge under the title "The Ernest Life." Both volumes have had a considerable sale. A third volume, "The Culture of Manhood," was published by Crowell and Co., of New York and Boston, and had a large sale in the United States.

Meanwhile I continued to write and publish, first serially, and then in book form, at least one story a year. This was the work I liked best. Moreover I had to earn my living, and this was the pleasantest way of doing it.

For many years I had very few competitors in the wide field of what I may term ethical fiction. For this reason perhaps rather than from any particular merit they possessed my books had an enormous sale, many of them running into twenty and thirty editions. Indeed I was credited with having a larger circulation than any other living English writer.

The critics on the whole treated me with great

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kindness, and I certainly received considerable attention from the Press. I should not like to hazard a guess at the number of times I have been interviewed or the number of articles that have been written about me in daily and weekly newspapers and in monthly magazines such as *The Strand*, *The Windsor*, and *Pearson's*. *Punch* has had its little joke at my expense from time to time, but has never indulged in a malicious word. A writer, in a long article in *The Academy*, attempted to explain the secret of my "amazing popularity," but he left the matter very much where he found it. If there is any secret, I have not the remotest idea what it is. A writer in *Pearson's Magazine* summed up the matter from his point of view in a single sentence. "He wrote of what he knew for people whom he understood." Perhaps that gets as near the pith of the matter as anything that has been written.

The only article that I can recall that was really savage and malicious appeared in the *Daily Mail*. It was a column long, and was headed "Silas the Seller." A recently published book of mine had come into the writer's hands for review. He admitted at the outset that my books commanded an enormous sale, and that fact seems to have angered him. He resented it, and was evidently determined to show his resentment in the only way that was open to him, and that was by damning me and all my works. He certainly

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went for me with great gusto, and I think he must have enjoyed himself. He said little or nothing about the book he was supposed to review. He went for the whole bunch. He slashed right and left, he smote me hip and thigh, he gave no quarter. He stripped me of every rag of pretence, and left me a mangled ruin. I had no art, no imagination, no sense of proportion, no knowledge of how to manage a situation, no appreciation of the value of words, no skill in character drawing, no anything in fact.

It was so extreme that it lost what value it might otherwise have possessed. If he had left me only one or two small merits it might have carried some weight, but I think most readers felt that it was simply abusive, and so attached no importance to it.

A day or two later I received a letter from Lord Northcliffe, and as it was not marked private I may, without breach of confidence, transcribe it here.

The Daily Mail,

January 20th, 1908.

DEAR MR. HOCKING,

I understand that a very foolish book notice, which I did not see at the time, has given you annoyance. I greatly regret it, and have taken steps that I think will prevent the recurrence of anything of the kind.

Yours very faithfully,

NORTHCLIFFE.

I am not aware that I expressed annoyance to anyone. If one is annoyed by any criticism

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that appears in the Press it is generally advisable to say nothing about it. Perhaps Lord Northcliffe assumed that I was annoyed. Anyhow it was very sporting of him to write, and I thanked him for his letter by return of post.

It was reported soon after that the writer of the article had ceased his connexion with the *Daily Mail*, but that may have been mere gossip. I should be sorry if the writer lost his post because of his attack on me.

In saying that on the whole the critics treated me with great kindness I am not implying that I escaped unfavourable criticism. It would be absurd to suggest that. I came in for my share as all men do who are in any degree in the public eye.

Reviewers of books like other people have their likes and dislikes, and if they don't like a book they say so, not offensively, but quite frankly, and if they have space they give their reasons. I have been amused sometimes, and occasionally a little irritated by the mistakes made. I was told on one occasion that I had spoiled my story by drowning my heroine in the middle of the book, when as a matter of fact she was happily married at the end.

Quite recently a reviewer said that I had laid the scene of my story in Ireland, when Ireland was never mentioned from beginning to end. I expect at the moment the writer had some other story in his mind, or it may be that the printer's devil had got his copy mixed.

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It is more irritating when one is fathered with sentiments that one never expressed and with opinions that one detests. This has happened to me more than once, and the annoying part is that give a wrong statement twenty-four hours start and it is hopeless to try and overtake it.

For a few years after I settled in London I subscribed to a Press-cutting agency. I was curious to see what the newspapers were saying about me. But after a while I came to the conclusion that reading Press notices is an unprofitable business, and sometimes exceedingly irritating.

I remember one afternoon dropping into the Whitefriars Club for a cup of tea. The room was empty, but after a few minutes Hall Caine came in. He seemed depressed and irritable. He had just come from his publishers he told me, and had read through a big batch of Press notices of his latest book.

"I don't object to criticism," he said. "Indeed, a reasoned criticism, however severe it may be, is generally helpful. What I object to, and what annoy me are those flippant and irresponsible notices that contain nothing but a sting. They are like mosquitoes buzzing about. You can't get at them, you can't hit them back, and sometimes they draw blood."

"Why read them?" I questioned.

He looked at me in some surprise. "Don't you?" he asked.

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"I used to," I replied. "I read, of course, what appears in the papers that come to my house, and the cuttings that some of my friends are kind enough to send me. For the rest I let them slide. I don't see them."

"I am afraid I am more curious," was the rejoinder.

A friend of mine a few days ago sent me the following cutting from *Everyman*.

VISIBLE PROOF!

Mr. Silas K. Hocking, the well-known writer, is keenly interested in matters relating to local government, and tells one story which is almost too good to be true.

A Labour councillor was fighting hard for the institution of some baths in a small town, and met with a good deal of opposition. His party scored a small triumph, however, when one of their colleagues secured a seat on the Finance Committee.

At the next meeting presided over by the leader of the movement, he rose and observed:

"I hope the presence of Councillor —— on the Finance Committee will convince the Council of the necessity of these baths."

I have only two remarks re this interesting titbit. The first is that I am not interested in the least in matters relating to local government, and the second is that the story is entirely new to me. Yet I have no doubt it will be repeated again and again with my name as sponsor.

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I was a little surprised one morning at receiving a letter from the Editor of *Vanity Fair* asking me to give a sitting to Mr Leslie Ward (Spy), for a cartoon to appear in that journal.

I realized, of course, that to be cartooned or caricatured by so eminent an artist as "Spy" was no small compliment. It might not be fame, but it seemed to bring me within hailing distance of the less distinguished. I knew that everybody who was anybody had come at some time or other within the magic circle of his pencil, and to take my place, however remote, among the illustrious was no small matter.

In due course I made my way to Mr. (afterwards Sir Leslie) Ward's studio. It was on the ground floor and had been built originally I fancy as a workshop of some kind. It was large and effectively lighted from the roof. I carry no distinct impression of the furniture or "properties" of the room, but I was immensely interested in the hundreds of cartoons hung on the walls. "Spy" walked round with me while I examined a good many of them, and talked easily and pleasantly, regarding me all the time out of the corner of his eye.

It was certainly a miscellaneous collection, and it seemed to me that some of them had been done much more carefully than others. In some cases there was very little exaggeration. In others the exaggeration was so great as to be almost

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grotesque. There was no attempt to arrange them in classes or professions. Judges and jockeys, peers and parsons, politicians and painters, actors and authors, scientists and soldiers hung shoulder to shoulder in delightful higgledy-piggledy.

"Spy" seemed in no hurry to begin his work. We stood about and talked and smoked a cigarette or two, and I was barely conscious of the fact that he was studying my attitudes and facial expressions. He was an easy talker, and I felt quite at home with him.

After a while he asked me to stand in a particular spot, and he pulled his easel nearly opposite me and sat down in front of it. We went on talking in a desultory way all the time he was at work, and an hour or two passed quickly and pleasantly.

At length he laid down his palette and brushes, and rose to his feet. "That will do for to-day," he said.

"Have you finished?" I questioned.

"Not quite. I shall need you again to-morrow."

At the end of the second morning I asked if he would let me see what he had done, but he shook his head. That was entirely against his rule.

In due course the picture appeared in *Vanity Fair*. I cannot honestly say that I felt extremely flattered. A caricature is after all a caricature, and is not intended to flatter. No one could

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fail to recognize me. Many of my friends thought it extremely good, and undoubtedly clever. My younger son thought so well of it that he got a copy framed and hung in his room at Oxford. I never felt any inclination to frame a copy for myself.

What "Spy" did with pencil for *Vanity Fair*, James Douglas did with pen for the *Morning Leader*. It was a minute description of my features, my dress, my idiosyncrasies. Nothing escaped him; my manner, my voice, my gestures, my beard, my eyes, even my *pince-nez* were all set out in detail. If I did not see myself as he saw me it was not his fault.

Douglas has a fluent pen and a weakness for alliteration. Hence when he spoke of me as "all bones and beard" it simply meant that his well-known weakness got the better of him. I don't think he expects to be taken seriously, at least quite seriously. He can no more help exaggerating than he can help writing, and occasionally his exaggerations are almost humorous. Whether or not he wishes to be regarded as a humorist I don't know. He is a good fellow anyhow, and quite easy to read.

Speaking of humorists, my experience of them is that they are generally very serious-minded men. I have known quite a number of them. Mark Twain, Max Adeler, Jerome, Alden, W. W. Jacobs, Pett Ridge, and several others less distinguished, and in every case they had a deeply

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serious side. Every one knows how true this was of Mark Twain. Max Adeler was a Sunday-school teacher, and the editor of a financial paper. Alden, apart from his work, generally seemed burdened with care. Jerome once complained to me that, having written one or two humorous books, it was difficult to get people to take him seriously, and it has taken him years to live down his early reputation. Jacobs is a quiet thoughtful man with a sad, almost pathetic face. I remember one evening entertaining a number of writers at my house, when a well-known lady novelist whispered to me :

“ Is it true that Mr. W. W. Jacobs is here ? ”

“ Yes,” I answered. “ He is somewhere about.”

“ I want to see him very much,” she said. “ He must be awful sport.”

So I led her into the next room. “ There he is,” I said. “ With his elbow on the mantelpiece talking to Richard Whiteing and G. B. Burgin.”

“ Oh,” she gasped. “ I have been looking out for a round-faced, jolly-looking man.”

Burgin is brimful of humour, and yet I should not describe him as a humorist. He seems to have an inexhaustible store of funny stories which he tells with great gusto, and many of which he has unloaded in his “ Memoirs of a Clubman.” But what impresses one in reading his books is his unfailing high spirits. Nothing daunts him.

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He has worked harder than most men, and he is no longer young, and yet he goes cheerily on his way with a laugh and a joke as though he were still in the hey-day of youth. He can turn out a novel in less time than any man I know. He has already between sixty and seventy to his name, and he will go on turning them out as long as he can hold a pen or thump a typewriter.

Pett Ridge looks like a humorist and talks like one. And he writes just as he talks. And yet I fancy Pett is never so happy as when looking after friendless children or helping somebody who is down on his luck.

CHAPTER XVII

IN TWO CONTINENTS

IN June, 1909, I formed one of a delegation representing the churches of Great Britain that visited Germany in the interests of peace and goodwill.

The previous year a number of German burgomasters and pastors had visited this country on a similar mission. They had been received by King Edward at Buckingham Palace, had taken part in a big meeting of welcome at the Albert Hall, and had been entertained at a banquet at the Liverpool Street Hotel.

The late Allen Baker, M.P., was the chairman of the English reception committee, and largely the originator of the idea. There was at the time, as every one knows, a good deal of suspicion as to Germany's intentions. We could not understand the necessity for her immense army and her rapidly growing fleet. Lord Roberts voiced his mistrust repeatedly, and the mistrust of a good many others, and urged more effective preparation.

On the other hand a great many men of goodwill were anxious to cement more firmly the friendly relations that existed between the peoples of the two countries.

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I remember attending a drawing-room meeting at the house of Mr. Lloyd George in Downing Street, when the subject of an entente between Germany and England, similar to that which existed between England and France, was eagerly discussed and warmly advocated.

Hence when I was invited to join the delegation to Germany I accepted readily and gladly. Anything that would help to remove friction and lead to a better understanding was to be welcomed. I had visited Germany several times during the previous eight or ten years, and had become acquainted with a good many German people, and was prepared to believe the best of them and not the worst.

The delegation was representative of all the churches, Catholic and Protestants, Episcopalians and Nonconformists, English and Scotch, Irish and Welsh. There were Bishops and Deans, Monseigneurs and Fathers, Lords and Commoners, men of all creeds and all denominations.

The Germans were evidently determined not to be outdone in the matter of hospitality. They had been well received in this country, and they meant that we should be equally well received in theirs. They chartered the *Meteor*, which had been the Kaiser's private yacht, and we found her lying in Dover Harbour ready to take us across to Hamburg.

We were fêted and photographed, lunched and banqueted, from the time we reached Hamburg

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till we left Bremen nearly a fortnight later. Special trains were provided for us, railway stations were beflagged in our honour, and bands marched in front of us through the streets playing "Auld Lang Syne" and "God Save the King."

A civic reception awaited us at every place we visited, carriages were provided to take us to see the principal sights, and at Bremen the whole town appeared to be *en fête* the day after our arrival.

Two things stand out very clearly in my memory in connexion with this trip. The first was our visit to the Kaiser at Potsdam.

As a preliminary to this we were entertained by the Mayor and Corporation of the town to an elaborate luncheon, after which we drove out to the royal palace some little distance away, and were conducted through a number of state apartments—a rather tiring business as there was nothing particular to see—then we gathered at the end of a large room, and awaited the appearance of His Imperial Majesty—if that is the correct designation.

We had not long to wait. A door opened quietly, and the Kaiser entered, followed by the Empress and their daughter, the latter a slim and rather good-looking girl, and very simply attired. The Kaiserin was almost as simply dressed as her daughter. Her hair was almost white, and brushed up all round her forehead. Her expression was exceptionally sweet and kindly. Altogether a pleasant-looking woman.

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We stood in a large semicircle three or four deep. The Kaiser glanced round swiftly and smiled, showing big strong teeth. Then his chaplain introduced us in a few words, and the Kaiser began his speech. He spoke to us in English.

"Gentlemen," he began, then paused a moment and added the word "Brethren. It gives me real pleasure to receive you to-day."

He finished by saying, "I trust that this visit will tend to promote good feeling between the two great kindred nations. Gentlemen, I am very glad to have had the pleasure of receiving you."

The speech occupied perhaps three or four minutes in delivery. There was nothing in it of significance except the few words I have quoted. Had he been so minded he could have said much. He was at the head of the greatest military organization of the world. In his hands lay the issue of peace or war. Did he really desire peace? I came away feeling that he was very half-hearted in the cause.

He appeared friendly it is true. He shook hands with perhaps a dozen of those who stood nearest to him, but he manifested no enthusiasm for the cause we had come to represent.

He impressed me as being a stubborn man, but not a great man, an ambitious man but not a great-souled man. Away from his environment he would be ordinary, almost commonplace.

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The look of fierceness which artists always managed to get into his portraits was entirely absent. It was a mere pose, I fancy, intended to impress his subjects.

I left the audience chamber and wandered away across the grounds to Sans Souci, where tea had been provided for us in the orangery, feeling disappointed. Some of the gorgeous flunkeys who waited on us were far more imposing. We had been addressed by a drill sergeant rather than a prophet. The spiritual touch had been entirely absent. There was no atmosphere of moral strength or greatness.

The other incident that stands out in my memory was a long talk I had with Admiral von Tirpitz. We had been invited by Count Douglas to a banquet in the Prussian House of Diet, Berlin, and by a curious chance I found myself seated next to the now notorious admiral. I had not the remotest idea who he was when he took the vacant chair on my left, though I assumed that he was a naval officer of high rank by the amount of gold braid on his uniform. Directly grace was said he passed me his card, and I read his name with a little start of surprise. He began to talk at once in easy and fluent English. He knew England well {and greatly admired it. He had two daughters at school in Cheltenham. He hoped that England and Germany would always stand shoulder to shoulder, and by so doing preserve the peace of the world. Germany

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desired nothing so much as to remain in friendly relation with us. He greatly regretted that Lord Roberts and others doubted Germany's good faith. There was absolutely no reason for doing so. I naturally asked him why Germany had so recently accelerated the building of her new battleships. That he told me was merely for the convenience of the contractors. The ships would not be delivered before the date specified.

But why did they need so many warships?

They had now a large merchant marine to protect.

Protect from what or from whom?

Germany had enemies and they had to be on the safe side.

But the seas were quite free. England alone had a commanding navy. Was England the enemy feared?

By no means.

But since Germany had such a narrow sea board, why the necessity for such an enormous fleet?

They imported so much food stuffs.

But of whom were they afraid? Who was likely to molest their merchant ships? Was their rapidly growing fleet calculated to allay our suspicions? On the face of it was it not provocative?

So we talked on and on, I asking questions, and he answering them. Our host, who sat

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opposite, left the table and his guests followed, and still we continued to talk. The waiters came and removed the dishes and plates, and still we kept our seats. The room emptied itself into an adjoining apartment where coffee was served, and still our talk flowed on. Only when the lights were lowered did we follow the others.

I am bound to say that I was impressed by his apparent sincerity, by the readiness with which he answered my questions, by his protestations of goodwill, by the case he made out for Germany, looked at from his point of view.

A tall and rather heavily built man, with blue eyes, a long blond beard slightly tinged with grey, a suave manner and pleasant voice. A sort of big father, religiously inclined and full of benevolent intentions. Such was the impression I got.

If I had the opportunity of speaking to any British statesman when I got back he would be glad if I gave him the gist of our conversation, with the assurance of his sincere goodwill. . . .

On my return I wrote to Mr. McKenna, who was then First Lord of the Admiralty, and told him of my long conversation with Von Tirpitz, offering to repeat to him the substance of our talk if he cared to hear it.

Mr. McKenna replied at once and made an appointment. I took my notes with me, and we spent the best part of an afternoon together.

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Mr. McKenna listened attentively, interjecting a question here and there. I saw, however, that he was not greatly impressed. He had his own trusted sources of information. Talk was cheap and protestations counted for little. Men were to be judged by their deeds.

He pulled down a large map on the wall and pointed to marks here and there indicating German coaling stations. What did they mean? He let out no state secrets, but he knew Von Tirpitz better than I did, and he evidently believed that the German admiral had been pulling my leg.

I left the Admiralty feeling considerably depressed. I had been so hopeful, so confident even, of Germany's goodwill. I had listened to a hundred speeches all breathing the same spirit. I had talked to professors, to parsons, to soldiers, to members of the Reichstag, and not a word had been uttered that would lead me to think there was any sinister motive lurking in the background.

The common people I could trust. They wanted to be left in peace to do their work, to extend their businesses, to cultivate their farms, to dwell securely in their homes. But what of their rulers. Were they plotting in the dark? Intriguing against the peace of the world? And what if they should succeed? The people would be helpless.

But what of the Church? Had those rulers got their thumb also on the Church? Was the

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Church but the appanage of the State? If the Kaiser should declare war, would the Church back him up and its ministers give him their blessing?

I had been disappointed in the Kaiser's speech. The Church had spoken with one voice. Its sentiments we had applauded, but there had been but the faintest echo of these sentiments in the Kaiser's welcome. Mr. McKenna had hinted vaguely at a seething underworld.

Were we after all living in a world of illusion? Building our houses on the crust of a volcano? Eating, drinking and being merry while the earth was rocking beneath our feet? Worse still, were we all at the mercy of one man, or half a dozen men, who at a word could break through the crust and drop us all into a hell of torment?

There was something wrong somewhere. No ruler, no government even, should have the power to let loose the fires of hell without first consulting the people.

There was still much spade work to be done. The dream of the Nazarene was a long way yet from being realized. One could only hope for the best. And I did hope, little dreaming that Armageddon was so near.

The following summer I went with a couple of friends to Oberammergau to see the Passion Play, and took advantage of the occasion to visit a number of places in going and returning. From

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Calais we went on to Lille, our first stopping-place. Then, through the interesting country that has since been so cruelly devastated by the Great War, to Metz. Here we spent several days in visiting the battle-fields of 1870 and other places of interest.

After forty years of occupation the town was to all appearances entirely German. Indeed, we heard more German spoken than French. The proprietor of our hotel was German, and judging by the names over the doors most of the business houses had passed into German hands. The town looked clean and prosperous. The railway station would have done credit to a much larger place and on all hands there was evidence not only of German enterprise, but of civic pride.

I could not help wondering what the people felt, the great majority of whom were of French descent. It was impossible for us to discover during our brief visit anything on that point. Out on the battle-fields there were beautiful monuments to both French and German dead. The cornfields were dotted with mounds of stone, loose cairns, which marked the spot where scores, in some cases hundreds, of dead lay in a common grave.

The people to whom we talked were silent about what they felt. The German jackboot was everywhere in evidence. One evening we had to give up our table at dinner because some German

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officers chose that particular table at which to dine. The proprietor was apologetic but he was helpless. The military had to be obeyed.

They clanked into the dining room as though they were the lords of creation. Most of the diners stood up as they passed down the room. They scowled at us as though we were interlopers, and had no right to eat in the same room with them. They treated the proprietor with less civility than an Englishman would extend to an ordinary waiter. Everywhere in Germany I have noticed the same arrogance on the part of the military. While crossing Lake Constance on our return journey a young officer ordered the captain to remove all the baggage from one side of the deck to the other. The captain explained that the luggage was piled in this particular spot for convenience of landing at Constance. But this did not satisfy him, and the captain had to obey. An English captain would have taken the young popinjay by the scruff of the neck and dropped him overboard, but in Germany in 1910 the military were supreme, and no one else appeared to have any right to call his soul his own.

From Metz we went on to Heidelberg, and spent several pleasant days in this charmingly situated city, visiting the old castle and other places of interest.

Thence on to Munich where we found ourselves housed in the Palace Hotel fronting the park. Munich surprised and delighted me. I had not

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expected so fine a city, nor one so excellently planned nor so well kept. Neither had I expected such treasures of art nor such a display of fashion. The tea-gardens were crowded every afternoon. Bands discoursed excellent music, whilst the ladies in their summer attire gave an air of gaiety and festivity to the whole city.

From two to three hours run in a crowded train brought us to the quaint old-world village of Oberammergau, nestled among pine-clad hills.

We were all numbered, if not labelled. Guides met us at the station, and took us to our appointed billets. I was lodged at the house of Lazarus. In other words the man who took the part of Lazarus in the play was my host. Eight or ten others, chiefly Americans, were lodged in the same house. The living room was a large comfortable apartment. My bedroom allowed me just sufficient room to undress, but no more. The sanitary arrangements must have dated back to the beginning of the previous century.

I had paid for two night's lodgement, but decided that one would be quite sufficient, and when after breakfast I informed the mother of Lazarus that I would return to Munich at the close of the play she did not seem in the least disappointed. The secret of that I discovered later, for when I went to my room to fetch my bag I found that it was already occupied by a bearded Russian and that my bag had been deposited in the passage outside.

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The village, except during the hours when the play was on, was like a fair. Everybody was in the street. The babel of tongues was indescribable. Every nationality seemed to be represented though I came to the conclusion that English and Americans were in the majority. Where they all found accommodation passed my comprehension.

The theatre was a huge shed with a domed roof, open at one end like a railway terminus. The stage was outside, and for the most part uncovered. The background was a circle of blue hills.

Considering that the whole play was produced by village peasants it was a wonderful performance. The tableaux impressed me most. Many of them were exceedingly beautiful. The blending of colours exquisitely wrought out. The singing too was exceptionally good.

The play in parts was more than a little tedious. It was too long drawn out. How many hours it lasted I do not now remember. We took our seats about nine in the morning; there was an hour's interval for lunch, then back again to our seats till evening. Of course there was no element of surprise. Everyone knew the story. It was carried through decorously and reverently. Its religious value seemed to me to be negligible. It was a human rendering of a human story; beyond that there is little to be said.

I was glad to get away from the noise and

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rabble and tumult. I had seen the play, but nothing would induce me to see it a second time.

We went on from Munich to Vienna and Buda Pesth, then made tracks for home.

A year and a half later, that is, early in January, 1912, my wife and I took a trip to Egypt. The weather was bitterly cold when we left London and all the way across the Mediterranean we were glad of our heavy coats. In Alexandria when we landed the thermometer stood at 85° in the shade. In Cairo it was hotter still.

The day after reaching Cairo I was surprised to see my name in a local newspaper. I had seen no reporter and spoken to no one connected with the Press. The paragraph contained quite a lot of information that was new to me. As, however, all the references were kindly and even flattering, I made no attempt to correct their "inexactitude."

Egypt laid its spell on me from the first. I cannot explain why exactly. It is not a beautiful country, and except within narrow limits not even picturesque. A long strip of land lying between two deserts, perfectly flat and almost treeless. Here and there a melancholy palm lifts its drooping fronds high into the air, and adds to the general wistfulness of the scene. Even the Nile is for the most part invisible, gliding as it does like a great brown snake between steep banks of mud. The villages are squalid and ramshackle, and seem in the last stages of dilapida-

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tion. The fields of onions and corn and cotton and sugar-cane have nothing to break their monotony. The camels, and even the men and women, in the distance look immensely tall as they move silently across the level flats. And over all there broods an air of mystery, a strange stillness as though the world had paused in its onward rush, and was waiting breathlessly for something to happen.

Perhaps it is this immense quietness that lays its spell upon you. You are back again in pre-historic times before the world had grown noisy and clamorous. London and Paris and New York might be on another planet. You are out of the fret and noise and tumult. You are with the children of the mist in the youth time of the world.

It was the most restful holiday I have ever known. For eight days and nights we nosed our way up the river. And all the time there was never a letter or a telegram or a newspaper, or anything else to disturb the quiet serenity of our lives. If we stuck on a sandbank for an hour or half a dozen hours it did not matter. Time meant nothing. Why fret and fume? There was always to-morrow, and to-morrow would be as to-day, and every day was a dream.

Oh! the sunsets, and the purple dusk, and the nights of stars, and the unbroken stillness, and the immeasurable spaces, and the soft desert airs!

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The fascination of Egypt is not in its scenery but in its mystery, and that is something that cannot be described or explained. It wraps you about like a perfume or the memory of a dream. You cannot touch it or analyse it, but you are conscious of it all the while.

I shall not attempt any description of the Pyramids of Gaza, or Memphis, or Sakkara ; or of the Temples of Abydos, or Dendera, or Luxor or Karnak ; or of the Tombs of Thebes ; or the Collossi of Memnon. These things must be seen to be understood. One must get into the spirit of Egypt to appreciate Egypt.

We met people who frankly confessed that they were bored almost to tears, who found the Nile trip the dullest they had ever known, and Egypt the most uninteresting country they had ever struck. There was one man I was sorry for. He had sold his business in the States, and had crossed the Atlantic to see the old world. He had also vowed that he would not return for a year, and he was determined to stick to his vow. The poor man ticked off the days as they passed, and every day was twenty-four hours too long. He counted the months and weeks until his return, and talked of his home with a pathetic twist in his voice.

I tried to interest him in the history of Egypt, and lent him one or two small books, but he returned them unread. Books were nothing in his line he told me. He never read anything but

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his local newspaper, and that of course he could not get.

In Assuan I tried to get him to join us in a short trip across a corner of the desert in a sand-cart to visit the half-submerged Temple of Philae, but he shook his head. He did not care for old ruins ; he preferred something modern.

Poor man ! He ought never to have left his home. He would have been much happier selling cigars, which was his business.

CHAPTER XVIII

MAINLY ABOUT JOURNALISTS

I HAVE spoken of parsons and politicians, critics and humorists that I have known, but I have said little or nothing about journalists. My experience has not been large in this particular field, though I have done a good deal of journalistic work in my day.

At the head of the list I place the late W. T. Stead. I saw a good deal of him during the last eight or ten years of his life, and I think he talked to me as frankly as he did to most men. We disagreed constantly. His genius was so erratic that I often found it impossible to follow him, but I never met a man who took criticism in such good part. Now and then I came near losing my temper with him, but he was quite imperturbable. He would lie back on his sofa and laugh. "Go ahead," he would say. "Very likely I deserve it, but I must follow the light that is in me, proclaim the truth as I see it."

Of his absolute sincerity I never had a doubt. He was not only a great man, but a good man. Utterly fearless, sure of himself, and believing profoundly in his mission, he knew everybody who was anybody, had been everywhere, seen life

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in all its aspects, and had definite views on nearly every conceivable subject. I never knew a man who could go more directly to the heart of a question, or who could more quickly strip away all that was irrelevant or adventitious or inessential. He would plough his way through a mass of detail with amazing speed and present the salient facts before most men had time to grasp what it was all about. He had first-hand information on most questions picked up goodness knows how or where.

In the weekly "at homes" in his office overlooking the Embankment, he gathered round him all sorts and conditions of men—and women. They seemed to come from all the ends of the earth.

I told him once that it was a sort of "cave of Adullam," where everybody with a grievance, or a fad, or a discovery, or an invention, or a story to tell found his way. Politicians came, and travellers and big-game hunters, and poets and novelists, with a sprinkling of shams and humbugs and charlatans. One never knew who one was likely to meet. It might be refugees from Russia or Armenia or Korea, disciples of Tolstoi, devotees of Islam, or students from Japan or China or Hindustan.

It was in Stead's office that I had my first long conversation with General Botha, though I fear I did most of the talking, for Botha expressed himself in English with considerable

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difficulty ; unlike General Smuts who was educated at Cambridge and speaks English like a native.

It was at one of these " at homes " that I first heard the story of the Congo atrocities, told by a traveller who had just returned from that part of Africa, and who had brought with him photographs which he had taken himself.

It was at an " at home " of another kind at Stead's house that I met Sir Johnstone Forbes Robertson who had just staged Jerome's " Passing of the Third Floor Back " at St. James's Theatre. Jerome had invited me to witness his play, and I had acceded to his request. Jerome was present on the afternoon in question, as were also a number of writers and actors. Stead was anxious to have the play discussed from different points of view, and we discussed it all ends up.

When Stead was the centre of a party conversation never flagged. His views were often so unorthodox that somebody was almost certain to get on the rampage. His object I fancy was to draw people out. He would pick the brains of a room full of people without their guessing what he was after.

Like most geniuses he was occasionally very unpractical. On one occasion he sent for me to discuss a new daily paper that he meant to bring out. It was to be on quite novel lines. No party politics. A paper for the home. He read me from a galley slip the first leading article.

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What did I think of the article? What did I think of the idea?

"The article is all right," I said. "But the idea is all wrong. You will never make a success of a daily paper on those lines. You will simply waste your money and will have nothing to show for it."

We discussed the matter during the greater part of the afternoon, but he remained unconvinced.

He brought out the paper a week or two later, an excellent paper in its way—but it did not run to many issues. He was quick to discover that people did not want it, and he brought it to a sudden end. But he must have wasted a large part of his savings in the venture.

I don't think that worried him greatly. He could always make sufficient to provide for his moderate wants. He lived simply and was never socially ambitious. He was a mystic, a dreamer, and in a certain sense a fatalist. He had an unshaken and an unshakeable belief that he would die a violent death at the hands of a mob. He also believed that some day he would go into Parliament. Whether or no "Julia" had anything to do with those beliefs I don't know. Spiritualism had become an obsession with him. But in spite of his dreams and fancies, and what seemed to me superstition, he was a great man, and when he went down in the *Titanic* I felt I had lost one of my best friends.

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Amongst living journalists, T. P. O'Connor stands in the very first rank. I know no one in whom the journalistic instinct is more highly developed, no one more gifted in the art of selection, no one who can tear the entrails out of a book with greater despatch, and no one who can produce copy at a greater speed.

I made his acquaintance soon after coming to reside in London. He asked me to contribute to a series of short autobiographies which he was publishing in M.A.P. under the heading "In the Days of my Youth." T. P. is a man whom it is not easy to resist. He is so genial and persuasive, his voice is so soft and kindly, he carries with him such an atmosphere of friendliness, that one's heart goes out to him instinctively. There is something else which I do not find easy to describe, a strain of melancholy, shall I call it? An undertone of pathos, as though a drop of Ireland's age-long sorrow had got into his blood. It lurks in the tones of his voice, and gives a sort of wistfulness to the look in his eyes.

There are some people who draw me out unconsciously. I feel at home with them from the moment we meet. There are others who produce the opposite effect. They repel me, drive me into my shell, freeze me. There are people whom I have known for twenty or thirty years, I meet them constantly, talk with them from time to time, and yet I am conscious that I do not know

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them at all, I have never got near to them or they to me.

T. P. is a Celt, so am I. Perhaps that explains why I was drawn to him from the first. In religion, in our tastes, in our outlook on life, we are miles apart, and yet I feel I can talk to him intimately and about intimate things.

I don't know if he feels the same about me, perhaps he does. He came to me one day to discuss a project he had in his mind. Did I think there was room for a new and superior kind of "Tit-Bits," something literary and intellectual, a weekly journal that should be full of gems, not trifles, extracts from the best books, the best speeches, the best reviews, literary criticisms, a digest of at least one book a week, etc., etc.?

Did I think there was a sufficiently large public in England to support such a venture?

I knew, of course, T. P.'s *penchant* for bringing out new papers, and yet I could not understand then, nor do I understand now, why two men of such widely different types as W. T. Stead and T. P. O'Connor should both seek my advice on a matter that was entirely outside my province.

I could only express my personal opinion and I did so frankly. I do not flatter myself that it weighed with either of them. It did not in Stead's case I know. As regards T. P. my views coincided with his own. Had I urged him against the project I have no doubt he would have gone forward just the same.

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Very few of us really want advice. What we do like is to be confirmed in our own view. Anyhow *T. P.'s Weekly* proved a great success.

Sir William Robertson Nicoll is not only a great journalist, but a great editor and a great bookman. What he does not know about books is not worth knowing. What puzzles one is how he has found time to know so much about other things.

It is said of Gladstone that he could take in the meaning of a whole page at a glance. Just as the ordinary reader picks up words without seeing each separate letter, so Gladstone would grasp a whole page without picking out each individual word.

I think that must be true also of Robertson Nicoll, else how in the name of all that is mysterious is his amazing knowledge of books to be explained?

He finds time to edit a weekly paper, and to contribute a whole page to it, to edit a monthly *Theological Review*, and to superintend the bringing out of a monthly literary journal. He undertakes other duties I am told in connexion with a large publishing house. He must have business and financial affairs of his own to look after, and he finds time to visit his clubs, and spend pleasant evenings with his friends. One almost wonders if he ever finds time to sleep!

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I have known Sir William for five and twenty years, or to speak more correctly I have known of him. I have met him scores of times, have chatted with him again and again. I have always found him friendly and pleasant. I have corresponded with him, and contributed occasionally to some of his journals, but it would be presumption on my part to say that I know him.

I remember Ian Maclaren saying to me, as we sat chatting in his study in Liverpool, "There are at least four distinct Robertson Nicolls. There is Nicoll the religious mystic, Nicoll the shrewd business man, Nicoll the literary critic and bookman, and Nicoll the hail-fellow-well-met pal and friend."

That is true of course in a greater or lesser degree of most men, but I think I saw quite clearly what Ian Maclaren meant. In Sir William the lines of distinction are more definitely drawn than in most. He is many-sided, and only his most intimate friends know him on all his sides.

In the same partial way I knew G. K. Chesterton and Hilaire Belloc. That is I have met them frequently, conversed with them, broken a lance with both in the Press and in debate. I regard them as among the ablest men of letters we possess.

W. H. Massingham, another great journalist, I know less well, though I have met him often.

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A. G. Gardiner I know more intimately. He became Editor of the *Daily News* at the time I was contesting Mid Bucks, and I had occasion to see him more than once at his office. Since then I have met him constantly, have served with him on the same committees, and have chatted with him again and again over the tea-cups. There is nothing mysterious or unapproachable about A. G. G. He is frank, genial, almost boyish at times, and he looks absurdly young for his age.

A. G. G. is more than a journalist. His best work will live as literature. What I admire in him most is his honesty; next to that his fearlessness.

Robert Donald was my near neighbour for several years, and we used to drop into each other's houses for a chat. At that time he was editing a journal devoted to municipal matters on which he is an authority. Then the Lloyds got hold of him and set him at the head of the *Daily Chronicle*, which he conducted for many years with remarkable success. When the *Chronicle* changed hands he packed his bag and left. Donald is no opportunist. He could not trim to save his life. He went out into the wilderness as other men have done. How much he sacrificed I do not know, but I think I can guess. Honour is more precious to some men than Honours and loyalty to principle more highly esteemed than gold.

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The name of J. A. Spender stands high in the list of distinguished journalists. I cannot claim the honour of his acquaintance in any real sense. I have met him, of course, spoken to him, sat at the same table with him, heard him speak. A man of distinguished appearance, gentle in his manner, a little shy I should fancy. Never pushful or assertive, a scholarly and polished gentleman. His brother Harold whom I know well, is of a somewhat different type, and yet in some respects they are singularly alike. Harold is more robust, I had nearly said robustious—yet he has the same charm of manner, the same winning smile, and even in his writing there is a similar grace of style.

I can hardly speak of the late Frederic Harrison as a journalist though for fifty years I have read his articles in various journals and reviews. A disciple and an apostle of Comte, a great thinker, a great writer, a great Englishman, the friend of Herbert Spencer and Robert Browning, and other distinguished men of the Victorian era, I heard him describe himself quite recently as a Liberal Independent, which is not the same thing as an Independent Liberal. A few weeks earlier (April, 1922) I spent a pleasant hour or two with him in his beautiful home in Bath, a house rich in treasures which he had gathered and garnered, and which he evidently loved.

He was seventy when I first met him. That

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was more than twenty years ago. To the end his mind was as clear and alert as ever. He talked with all his old verve and animation, and was keenly alive to all that was happening in the world.

While showing me a bronze *bas-relief* portrait of Comte, which he had received from some learned society in Paris on his 90th birthday, I put on my *pince-nez* to read the inscription.

"Do you wear glasses?" he said in a tone of surprise.

"Unfortunately," I said. "Don't you?"

"Oh, no," he replied with a smile. "My sight is still quite good."

It was a great pleasure to listen to his talk as we went from room to room, and examined his books and pictures and busts and bronzes and portraits and curios and presentation addresses.

Time slipped away unheeded, and the afternoon was gone almost before I was aware. He wanted me to stay and have tea with him, but I had made another engagement, and was compelled to hurry away.

Harrison was almost the last representative of a great period. It is the habit of the present generation to sneer at the Victorian age. For myself I wish that the present age could compare with it. We have certainly made advances in science and discovery. We can travel faster, and communicate with each other more quickly. But in art, in literature, in philosophy, even in morals, we have little reason for boasting.

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A number of journalists I have known have won distinction in the realm of literature. J. M. Barrie is the most striking illustration of this.

My old friend Richard Whiteing spent the greater part of his life as a journalist, and it was not until he had practically retired from newspaper work that he wrote his famous novel, "No. 5, John Street."

Arnold Bennett began his literary career as a journalist, and still keeps up his connexion with the Press.

The latest success in this direction is Mr. A. S. Hutchinson, whose "If Winter Comes" has brought him sudden fame and fortune. Hutchinson is still a young man, modest and retiring. He gives one the impression of having not quite got over the surprise of finding himself famous.

Philip Gibbs, who won so much distinction as war correspondent, has again turned his attention to fiction, and with results which to my mind are eminently satisfactory. Though I have the impression that he will do still better work when he has freed himself from the atmosphere of war. He has a quick imagination, a graphic style, and more than all he has great moral earnestness.

Two novelists of my acquaintance have found their way into Parliament—Sir Gilbert Parker and A. E. W. Mason. The latter retired after a very few years. He told me that he found parliamentary work much too distracting. On his retirement I was asked to take his place. He

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came down to Coventry once or twice to help me in my campaign, but I failed to hold the seat by about a hundred votes.

Sir Gilbert was in the House for many years, and would have remained there had his health continued satisfactory.

Clement Shorter, who edits *The Sphere* with so much distinction, has not yet tried his hand at fiction or attempted to enter Parliament, though both are within the region of possibility. Few men have a wider knowledge of fiction and fiction writers than he. Indeed his knowledge of books generally is prodigious. At the same time he is keenly interested in politics, and is still young enough to blossom out in either direction.

CHAPTER XIX

THE WHITEFRIARS

MY string of reminiscences would be incomplete without some reference to the Whitefriars Club. More than twenty years have passed since I joined the fraternity, and many changes have taken place in its personnel since then. Henty and Farjeon and Westall and Manville Fenn and Tom Gallon and Charles Garvice and Frank Bullen and William Senior and H. M. Stanley and many others have passed over to the majority. Others, like Carruthers Gould and Edwin Clodd, and Coulson Kernahan and Max Pemberton and Robert Leighton and H. G. Wells, have found residences in the country, and are rarely seen amongst us. But while individual members disappear the Club goes on. The young are for ever knocking at the gates. Its full complement of a hundred members is always maintained, and the waiting list remains as long as ever.

Until the Great War we met every Friday evening from the beginning of October to the end of March. We dined at six so that we might have a long evening for discussion. The guest was always someone of distinction in art or literature or politics or one of the services. I

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recall such names as Viscount Goschen, Sir George Trevelyan, Lord Bryce, George Wyndham, the Duke of Marlborough, Mr. Lloyd George, Lord Balfour, Lord Courtney, General Sir Francis Lloyd, Sir Harry Johnston, Hugh Clifford, Father Bernard Vaughan, Oscar Asche, Admiral Meux, Lords Birkenhead, Rhondda, Leverhulme, Shaw, Buckmaster and Moulton; Bernard Shaw, Sir George Reid, Lord Ullswater, Lord Milner, Augustine Birrell, Lord Robert Cecil, Beerbohm Tree, Maarten Maartens, Mr. Choate, and many others.

One of the finest addresses to which I have ever listened was given by Lord Moulton. The subject he chose was "Sentiment." He spoke without a note, never hesitated for a moment for the right word, never got a word in the wrong place. It was subtle, penetrating, clear-cut as a cameo, and from a literary point of view about as perfect as an address could be. Lord Buckmaster followed with an address of great brilliance, delivered on the spur of the moment.

It was in 1903 that Lord Goschen delivered his address on "The Slippery Slope of Autobiography," and none of the Friars who were present will I fancy ever forget it. It seems a pity that such addresses should be lost to the world, but the Friars have a rule that what is said in the club room shall not be reported in the public Press. It is perhaps a good rule on the whole.

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Guests can speak with much more freedom when they know they are not going to be reported, and occasionally I have heard some rather startling deliverances, and in the debates that have followed there has often been a charming lack of reticence.

I remember a night when Bernard Shaw was the guest, and he just let himself go. And the speakers who took up the running followed suit. For an hour or two there was quite a bewildering display of fireworks.

We had a similar evening when Mr. F. E. Smith was the guest. (He was not the Lord Chancellor then, and so was more free to speak his mind.) I have forgotten the subject of the address, but a Scotch M.P. who was present followed with some scathing criticisms. This loosened the tongues of a good many others. Blows (not physical) were given and returned with great vigour, and as the guest had the last word he made the most of his opportunity. It was a most exhilarating evening.

Some of the guests from time to time told delightful stories by way of illustration. I remember Vachell the novelist telling us of a man he met in a small town in California (San Bernardino, I think). Like many another Californian, he thought his town the centre of the universe.

“ You are from the Old Country, I guess ? ”
he said to Vachell.

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"That is so," was the reply.

"You know London?"

"Yes."

"Paris?"

"Yes."

"Fine cities, I presume?"

"Yes. Very fine."

"Ah, yes, so I've heard. But *remote*."

I need not point the moral of a story I heard Conan Doyle tell. A young Canadian lived near the Falls of Niagara. He had lived there all his life, and thought nothing of them. But he had read Southey's poem, "How the water comes down at Lodore."

—Shocking and rocking,
Darting and parting,
Threading and spreading,
Whizzing and hissing, etc., etc.

and he thought to himself here was something worth seeing; and he resolved that if he ever had the chance he would go and see them. By and by when he had saved sufficient money he came across to Liverpool and made his way direct to Keswick. The weather was hot, and there had been no rain for weeks. He trailed down the lake side in the blazing sun in search of the falls. Every now and then he paused and wiped his hot forehead and listened for the roar. Then he tramped on again and looked in all directions for

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the sight of the tumbling water, but he could see nothing, hear nothing.

At length, tired out with his long tramp he sat down on a mossy boulder and once more mopped his forehead.

A farm-labourer passed by, and he hailed him.

"I say, my man, can you tell me where I can find the Falls of Lodore?"

"Yes, sir," said the man. "You're sittin' on 'em."

One evening, after an address by Lord Leverhulme on business methods, someone told a story of a young commercial traveller who started out from Bristol on his first journey. He went south and west, calling at Taunton and Exeter and Torquay and Newton Abbot, and by the end of the week found himself at Plymouth. In the commercial room of the hotel he found an old traveller who had been on the road for forty years.

"Well, Charley," said the old man, knowing that this was the young man's first experience. "How have you got on?"

"Bad," said the young man. "Very bad. I don't believe I shall be able to stick it."

"Sorry to hear that," was the reply. "What is the matter?"

"Everything is the matter," Charley answered disgustedly. "Do you know I've been insulted every day of the week?"

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"Insulted?" said the old man in surprise. "Well, now, that is strange. I've been on the road forty years. I don't deny that I've been shown the door again and again. I don't deny that I've had my samples thrown into the street. I don't deny that I've had my hat kicked into the gutter. But insulted! Never!"

This was capped by another story of an insurance agent.

This agent was very persistent and persevering. He had called upon a gentleman so frequently to try to induce him to take out a Life Insurance Policy that the gentleman at last completely lost his temper, and taking the agent by the scruff of the neck flung him down the stairs.

The agent picked himself up resignedly, dusted the knees of his trousers with his hand, brushed his hat with his coat sleeve, and walked smilingly back into the office. "Now, joking apart," he said. "What about that policy?"

Twice each year ladies were, and still are, invited to a special dinner, the first sometime in May, and the other, the Christmas dinner, about the middle of December. These functions are held away from the Club Rooms, either at the Trocadero or the Hotel Cecil, and are usually very largely attended. Some distinguished lady guest responds to the toast "Sovran Woman," and

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speaking generally the ladies do great credit to the occasion.

Looking back over a number of years I recall such names as Flora Annie Steel, Lucas Malet, Sarah Grand, Annie Swan, Alice Williamson, Marie Connor Leighton, Clemence Dane, Lady Astor, the Countess of Warwick, Florence Barclay, Elizabeth Robbins, and Gertrude Atherton.

Occasionally we arranged a summer picnic or excursion. It might be up the river or among the hills of Surrey. One year we went so far afield as Stratford-on-Avon, and were entertained by Marie Corelli at her house. Miss Corelli proved a charming hostess, and we brought away pleasant memories of our visit.

On another occasion we visited George Meredith at Box Hill. We were all delighted to meet the veteran writer. The weather was perfect, and in his big garden we spent one of the pleasantest afternoons I have known. Meredith for the most part sat in his chair and seemed anxious to talk to everybody, and his talk was delightful—keen, witty, and humorous.

His interest in life, in literature, in the new generation of writers, in the events of the hour seemed as keen as ever. Though feeble in body he had lost nothing of his mental alertness, and his memory appeared to be unimpaired. The afternoon passed all too quickly, and when we left we felt that the chances were

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that we should never see him again, and so it proved.

Though a new generation of Friars is gradually and almost imperceptibly taking the place of the old, a good many of the old ones still remain, Whiteing and Gould and Nicoll and Perkins and Shaylor and Treloar and Clodd, to name only a few, are still active and interested.

Those who seemed young or comparatively young when I joined, have advanced far into middle age. Arthur Spurgeon, Clement Shorter, Keighley Snowden, Shan Bullock, Haldane Macfall, G. B. Burgin, Warwick Deeping, J. A. Hamerton, J. A. Steuart, Arthur Mee, Hamilton Fyfe, Dr. Kimmins, Percy Alden, Morgan de Groot, my brother Joe, and many others, may still feel youthful in spirit, but they are no longer boys. Most of them have passed the crest of the hill and are going down on the other side, whilst the bitterness of war has aged some beyond their years.

During the years of the war we forgathered only on rare occasions. With the streets darkened and food rationed, and air raids of constant occurrence, there was more excitement than fun in going out after nightfall. I remember one night, not much after ten o'clock, walking the whole length of Fleet Street without meeting a soul. My footsteps echoed on the hard pavement in a way that was positively uncanny. Every window of course was in darkness, and the

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blackened electric lamps threw down only the feeblest light. When, near the Law Courts, the figure of a man loomed up in front of me I started as though I had met a footpad.

It was not only a great relief but a great joy to meet again when the war was over. There were gaps of course for every section of society paid its toll of human life.

We have not yet got back to the weekly dinners. For one thing dining out is expensive. Moreover, few men who earn their living by their pen are as well off as they were before the war. The Knights of the Quill have no trade union. They have to take what is offered to them or go without. Printers, compositors, machine men, bookbinders could demand an increase in wages, and their demands were acceded to, but the men and women who produced the stuff had to be content in many instances with a less rate of pay, and were thankful for half a loaf when they could not get a whole one.

I have often been surprised at the cheerfulness of the writing fraternity. A few of the more fortunate amongst us had been able to make provision against a rainy day, but the majority had been able to make no such provision, and the war reduced them to pitiful straits. Yet they kept a brave face, and very rarely were they heard to complain.

As long as I live I shall cherish a warm place in my heart for the Friars. They are good

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fellows all. I am not going to claim that they are all Bayards, *sans peur et sans reproche*, but they are nevertheless excellent stuff, generous, brotherly, and thoroughly human, without pretence, or side, or jealousy, glad to reach out a friendly hand and ready whenever possible to help a lame dog over the stile.

CHAPTER XX

WAR WORK

THE early spring of 1913 my wife and I spent in Mentone. When the weather got warm we moved to Stresa, on Lake Maggiore, and returned home by way of the Simplon and Montreux. I have had no long holiday since. We had planned to go to Greece the following year, but the war put an end to that as to many other things.

I don't think any of us realized before the war how happy we were, or how prosperous we were, or what a pleasant place the world was to live in. We took life as we take the sunshine, as a matter of course. Our security and comfort seemed so sure that we never dreamed that they could be upset. Nor did it occur to us that all the necessities of life were cheap and plentiful, that rates and taxes were not burdensome, that travelling was pleasant, and inexpensive, and that there was work for everybody who was willing to work. All these things were accepted as a matter of course, they were part and parcel of our normal life.

As we look back to-day, we wonder that we were not more thankful, that we were so un-

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appreciative of the blessings and privileges under which we lived, that we did not value more greatly the comfort and beauty of life.

I was staying with my family at Newquay when the storm burst. My first feeling was one of utter bewilderment. It seemed as if the bottom had dropped out of everything. Everything for which I had lived and laboured had fallen into dust. All my work and striving had been in vain.

In the light of the Christian ethic, by which I had tried to steer my life, war was a lapse into barbarism, it was a return to the argument of the cave-dwellers, it had in it no glint of idealism ; it was brutal and barbarous, and sordid and devilish.

Yet what could we do ? Could we deny our promise to Belgium ? Could we let the hordes of Germany trample upon the whole of Europe ? Suppose we and France and the rest put into practice the doctrine of non-resistance ? Suppose we let the Kaiser have his way and turned the other cheek, what then ?

There would be no killing, of course, no wasted cities, no devastated country. The Kaiser would simply proclaim himself lord of Europe, and we should all have to pay tribute to him.

Clearly the doctrine of non-resistance demands too much, more at least than human nature is able to bear. Nationalism cuts deeper than the

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Sermon on the Mount. We say that we would rather die than that Germany should annex us, rather die than submit to German rule.

Well we have resisted and have conquered, and yet Germany has not been annexed, nor has any foreign rule been set up in Berlin, nor has German nationalism been destroyed. But why not ?

Suppose Germany had won, would she have annexed the whole of France and Italy, and destroyed the French and Italian parliaments ? Would England have been annexed also, and turned into a German state ? Could these things have been done under any conceivable circumstances ? And if not, why did Germany declare war ? What did she hope to gain ?

"The spoils to the victors," we say. But after a wasting war there are no spoils, as we have discovered.

We have discovered also that a great nation cannot be destroyed or annexed, or even be made to pay for the war she brought about.

Then what is the use of war ?

During the first few weeks of the war I turned these questions over in my mind again and again, but I could see no light anywhere. The idealism of the New Testament bore no relation to reality. In the present state of the world the Sermon on the Mount seemed unworkable. The one fact that dominated every other was that we were at

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war, and that we should have to go through with it to the bitter end.

As at other times invitations poured in on me to preach here and there. But I put them all aside. I could not preach. I was in the wrong mood. I did not love my enemy. I could not pray for him. I wanted to curse him. I scorned to turn the other cheek, I would rather slay him.

Moreover, if I could with a clear conscience have preached mercy and forbearance, and peace and goodwill, what would have been the use? It would have been like throwing dust into the teeth of a storm. So I gave up preaching, and have not resumed it.

I am not seeking to justify myself. I am simply stating the facts. I must follow such light as I have, and take the consequences. Such creed as I have is largely that of the Quakers. If Christianity is right war is wrong—at least that is how it appears to me. I do not seek to bind any man's conscience, neither can I have my own conscience bound.

Like most other citizens I was anxious to "do my bit" and render what help I could to the nation in its need. So I offered my services to the government in any capacity it liked to employ me. I thought I might have been of some service in propaganda work, or in the Censor's office, or in some education department, or at the Ministry of Pensions, but I made the initial mistake of offering to work for nothing. Evidently

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I was taken at my own valuation. If I was prepared to work for nothing clearly I was worth nothing. I might have known if I had given the matter a little thought that the men most appreciated in government departments are those who do nothing and draw large salaries for doing it. I was thinking how I might save the country something, forgetting that economy is a thing abhorred, especially in war time. So, after going the round of the departments, and being treated everywhere as though I had come to ask a favour, I decided that I had better stay at home and go on with my ordinary work.

Then the Y.M.C.A. asked me if I would devote some of my time to visiting the camps and talking to the soldiers. This I consented to do, and from that time till April, 1919, I was never idle. My pen had more rest than it had known for years. I think I visited most of the camps in England, including hospital and segregation camps. I travelled thousands of miles by road and rail and in all weathers. I slept in draughty tents, and in wooden bunk-houses, and fed on bully beef and tinned fruit. I got wet to the skin more than once, and suffered discomforts such as I had never known before. I talked to tens of thousands of men including Americans, Australians, New Zealanders, and Canadians, and in all my experience I never talked to more attentive and interested crowds. When there was no more sitting room they would stand leaning against

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the walls of the huts for an hour on the stretch without showing the least sign of impatience. Some of the larger camps I visited two or three and even four times, generally staying a week, and in the case of the Canadian camps I frequently gave special addresses to the officers. Occasionally I got round me groups of thirty or forty men and talked to them more intimately than I could in a public address. In this way I got to know what the men were thinking, and was able in some measure to adapt my addresses to meet their needs.

In those more quiet gatherings the men not only asked questions, but expressed their feelings in language that was often more forcible than elegant. Their hatred of war and the whole military system was bitter beyond expression. It was an almost universal complaint that they were treated more like cattle than men. They were no longer individuals, but just platoons and companies, to be harried and hurried, and driven and dragooned, without any regard to what they felt and suffered.

Many of them broke down when they talked about home and friends. Some had enlisted of their own free will, others had been conscribed, but none of them guessed what soldiering meant till they were actually in it.

"Never no more," was a common expression. If they were lucky enough to come out alive, if

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Most of them appeared to be fatalists. If their number was up that settled it. There was no escape. If a shot had to turn a corner it would get them.

They didn't believe that God Almighty had anything to do with the war, or was interested in it. If men were such fools as to kill each other He let them do it.

Jesus Christ, from all they had heard and read about Him, was "a bit of all right." He played the game and stuck up for a pal, and was never hard on a fellow who had made a mistake or was down on his luck.

Taken as a whole, it was astonishing to me how little they knew about religion, or at any rate how little they pretended to know. Creeds and dogmas did not interest them. Churches and parsons they had no use for. Some of the padres were great; others—well they had got soft jobs.

There were exceptions of course. Most of the New Zealanders for instance appeared to be Sunday-school boys. Many of the Canadians had a passion for education. And all of them, of whatever nationality, loved to listen to a straight talk about honour and duty and citizenship and playing the game. But religion, apart from ethics, appeared to win but little response.

It was our custom to hold a short religious service at the close of the address, but as a

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rule only a small proportion of the audience stayed.

I hope I did some good. I made many friends both among officers and men. Boys still write to me from across the seas.

I was often very tired, for I was no longer young. The discomforts sometimes depressed me a little. I pined in the wintry weather for the warmth of my own fireside. But on the whole I enjoyed the work. The welcome the Tommies gave me atoned for much. My personal contribution may not have amounted to a great deal ; still I did what I could.

My family also gave of their best. My elder son, Ernest, got a commission in the Air Force, where his training as an engineer stood him in good stead. He was never sent out of the country, but he did excellent work at home.

My younger son, Vivian, joined the Inns of Court O.T.C. soon after the war broke out. He was just beginning to make his way as a barrister when the country's call came ; and though he hated war, he responded readily. He was sent to Berkhamstead for training. Never very robust the intensive training to which he was subjected, the forced marches, the night operations, lying about on the wet ground during that first terrible winter, proved too much for him. After an illness he returned again. Then the forced marches strained his heart, and he never fully recovered. He was invalided out at length, and given a post

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in the Ministry of Pensions. Every few months he went before the Board, but he was never fit for active service.

He lived to see the end of the war and took part in the general rejoicing. In the February following, the terrible epidemic of "pneumonic flu" that swept the country, that swept all countries, caught him, and his weakened heart was unable to bear the strain. In less than a week he was dead.

That was my first great sorrow, the poignancy of which still remains, and will remain to the end.

The following note appeared in the Whitefriars Journal, written by the editor, Mr. G. B. Burgin.

"The sympathy of all Friars will go out to Friar Silas Hocking and Mrs. Hocking in the loss of their younger son, Vivian, who was smitten down by pneumonia and influenza in February last.

"Vivian Hocking was full of promise, a rising young barrister of twenty-nine, a writer of charming little plays, essays and stories, and gradually feeling his way to the full development of his artistic talent. And he leaves a young wife to mourn his loss, the wife of a year.

"I should like to say much about him, for I have known him since he was ten years old. Keenly as I feel his loss, I regret the more this

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meaningless cutting short of a career which was so rich in hopes, so full of a charming courage and energy in the face of all discouragements and difficulties. Friar Morgan de Groot and myself were with those who laid him to rest in the softly falling rain on that chilly February day. And as we came away the road was black with hearses and mourning coaches bent on a like errand to ours."

My elder son-in-law, Rowland Conder, an architect and surveyor by profession, got a commission in the Air Force, and was for some time in France in connexion with the erection of aerodromes; but was not sent into the fighting line.

My younger son-in-law, Seaton Tiedeman, left the Stock Exchange and enlisted directly the war broke out, and after receiving his commission in the 14th Cheshires, went out to France. From thence he was sent to Egypt. Invalided home, he was for some months musketry officer with the 3rd Cheshires at Birkenhead. Then he went out to the Gold Coast to the W.A.F.F. and accompanied a detachment of native soldiers to East Africa, and was engaged in rounding up the Germans when the armistice was signed.

My two daughters both went into offices, and remained there till the war was over and their husbands returned again to civil life.

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My wife spent a good deal of her time in one of the large depots where requisites were made for the various hospitals, and when the war came to an end she and a number of other ladies transferred their services to the Great Northern Hospital, where they still "carry on."

So during all those awful years, in various ways, all the members of my family did what they could.

Toward the end of February, 1919, I received an urgent request from the H.Q. of the Canadian Y.M.C.A. (which in the case of Canada was a Government department) to go out to Belgium for a month or five weeks, and give a series of addresses to the Canadian Tommies who were waiting demobilization.

They were being sent home as fast as they could get trains to take them out of the country, and ships to transport them across the Atlantic, but the process was necessarily slow, and the men were getting restive and impatient.

I could not resist the appeal, and early in March I set out on my journey. My heart was naturally heavy, for I had only just buried my son, but I knew that had he been alive he would have urged me to go. Also I knew that work is sorrow's best antidote.

It was bitterly cold when I started, and a heavy sea was running in the Channel. The discomforts of the passage were by no means

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lessened by the cumbersome life-belts we all had to wear, and by the news that a great many mines were still afloat. We had, however, taken so many risks, and for so many years, that I was not greatly worried. Something of the fatalism of the ordinary Tommy had I think got into my blood. If my number was up I should go west. If my work was done what did it matter?

I had been told to report myself at Namur, but how to get to Namur was the problem. I had expected that some Canadian official would meet me at Boulogne, and give me full directions, but after hunting up and down the town for several hours, and finding no one who could give me any assistance, I sought the English Commandant. He was most courteous and obliging, and got on to the telephone at once. In the end I was furnished with a free pass on what was called the "Cologne Express," and which passed through Namur.

The train was composed of about fifteen coaches belonging to various companies. I noticed beside the Est and the Nord, the Great Western, the Midland, the Lancashire and Yorkshire, and the London and North Western.

All the carriages were gutted, leaving only the bare walls, along which were arranged three tiers of let-down berths, into which we had to stow ourselves as best we could.

It was an officers' train, I being the only

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civilian in the crowd. For awhile I was regarded with evident curiosity, so I decided to explain who I was and where I was going. After that they became quite friendly. By no stretch of the imagination could it be called luxurious travelling. There was not a seat in the place, nor a peg on which we could hang our clothes, nor a step-ladder for those to whom had been allotted the top berths.

Fortunately mine was one of the bottom berths, so I had not much difficulty in getting underneath one of the army blankets, where I lay and reflected on many things, but chiefly on the imbecility of war.

The night passed, somehow. I dozed occasionally, but anything like sound sleep was out of the question. Every part of the line appeared to be under repair. Nearly every bridge and culvert had been destroyed, and our "express" crept along at times at almost a snail's pace.

It was no use worrying, however. With luck we should get to our destination sometime. Timetables did not count in those days.

In the early afternoon we reached Charleroi, where we all got out of the train and hurried off to an officers' club in the town. Here, through the kindness of my travelling companions, I was provided with a good lunch, as well as with the privilege of washing the grime from my hands and face.

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Toward evening we reached Namur, and an English officer I met outside the station directed me to the best hotel in the town. Fortunately I was able to secure a room, for the place was very crowded, and that night between clean sheets I slept the sleep of the just.

CHAPTER XXI

THE WORLD'S HOPE

MOST of my experiences in Belgium and France have been recorded in fictional form in my novel, "Watchers in the Dawn." Hence I shall not dwell on them at any length here.

My work among the soldiers was very similar to what it had been in England except that there were no military camps in Belgium. The Tommies were billeted all over the country, in towns and villages and hamlets. Nearly every cottage had its soldier and every villa residence its officer.

I felt considerable sympathy for the Belgian people. All through the war they had had the Germans billeted on them, and now that peace had come, they had to make room for our colonial Tommies until such time as they could be sent home.

From a financial point of view they did not do badly. Several of them admitted to me that during the early part of the war particularly, the Germans paid them well, though that was considerably discounted by their conduct when they had to clear out of the country.

A dear white-haired old lady—I believe she

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was a countess—took me round her big chateau, and pointed out with tears in her eyes, the evidences of the Germans' ingratitude. All through the war German officers had been billeted on her, and she had treated them kindly, but when the order for evacuation came they stripped her doors of finger plates, her stoves of all brass work, her kitchen of all copper and brass utensils. Indeed they purloined everything that could be of value to them and went off with a grin and not so much as a thank you.

And what was true in her case was true in thousands of others. In every town and village and hamlet which I visited, I heard the same story.

They spoke well of the Canadian Tommies. They were cheerful, they helped sometimes with the housework, and they made toys for the children; but—— Well they would be thankful to have their houses to themselves. They were cramped for room. They were tired of seeing so many soldiers about.

We held our meetings in cinemas, in theatres, in dance-halls, and occasionally in the open air, though nearly every village, however small, had its public assembly room.

The Tommies came in crowds. They were tired of kicking their heels all day long. They had finished their work, they had no longer any fighting to do, they did not even drill. They were just waiting until they could be taken out

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of the country. Hence any kind of entertainment was welcomed. A conjurer or a concert party or anybody who could talk straight was a godsend.

The getting from place to place, was our great trial. Most of the roads were atrocious. They had not been repaired since the war began. They had been used for bringing up guns and stores ; they were rutted and bumped beyond description ; there were holes in them in which you could bury a sheep. In the day time the worst of these holes could be avoided, but in the dark—well, we had to shut our teeth tightly and hope for the best. We travelled in motor lorries, and in ambulance cars, and occasionally in a farmer's cart. If we could get hold of a Ford car we thought ourselves in luck's way. The Ford cars seemed equal to anything. No road seemed too difficult for them to negotiate.

I am reminded here of the latest story I have heard about Henry Ford's ingenuity. It is said that he has invented a new kind of speedometer. When the car is travelling thirty miles an hour it shows a green light ; at forty miles an hour it shows a red light ; at sixty miles an hour it plays " Nearer my God to Thee."

Well, we never travelled sixty miles an hour or even thirty. But there were many occasions when the musical-box attachment would not have seemed out of place. I often speculated on the chances of our getting to our destination alive. A

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few bumps and bruises did not matter ; they were all in the day's work.

I had not expected the Belgian trip to be a picnic. My work among the soldiers in England had prepared me for a good deal, but I had not calculated on the state of the Belgian roads. Hence I had a somewhat livelier time than I had anticipated.

By the end of a fortnight I had lost count of the places I had visited, and after travelling round for a month it seemed to me that I had visited every part of the country. I slept in cottages, and in chateaux. I messed with officers and took pot luck with the Tommies. I got my fill of bully beef and sometimes I went hungry. It was all in the day's work. I soon learned to take things as they came and make the best of them.

One morning I reached a railway station just as a troop train was leaving. It was composed of about twenty cattle trucks, each truck being provided with a bundle of straw. But if it had been a first-class Pullman train the faces of the Tommies could not have expressed more delight. At last they were going home—home to parents and friends and sweethearts, home after long years of suffering and agony and heart-sickness. It was no wonder they laughed and shouted and decked themselves with ribbons. At last the day had come to which they had looked forward with such ardent longing. At last they were going home.

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A few of them were silent, their eyes full of tears. But for the most part they behaved like school children starting off on a picnic. They lay on the tops of the trucks and laughed, they sat in the openings with their legs hanging down between the wheels, they danced on the straw within, they flung pleasantries at their less fortunate comrades who were remaining behind.

Then the wheezy old engine shrieked its loudest and started off with a jerk. There were many dim eyes among the boys whose hour of deliverance had not yet come, as they watched the long train draw slowly out of the station. Then they turned away and went off in groups into the town.

A few days later in the long and straggling street of Orp-le-Grand a young Canadian came up to me a little diffidently and said :

“ May I ask you a question, sir ? ”

“ Why certainly,” I said, “ a dozen if you like.”

“ I hope you will not think me impertinent,” he went on, “ but I should like to ask you if you are the original Silas Hocking ? ”

“ The original ? ” I questioned, and I expect he caught a note of surprise or curiosity in my voice for he said hurriedly.

“ Well you see, it's this way. When I was quite a little chap back home in Canada my

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mother used to read me the stories of Silas Hocking, and when I saw the notice that he was to lecture to us out here I thought it couldn't be the real one."

"But why?" I questioned.

"Well you see, I thought he lived back in the time of John Bunyan or thereabouts, and that he had gone west ages ago."

I could not help laughing, he was so desperately serious.

"Is your mother alive?" I questioned.

"She was, the last time I heard, sir."

"Then you can tell her when you get home that you have seen the original."

"Bless my soul," he said, and he squeezed my hand in a way that made me wince. "I'm amazing glad I heard you last night." So we parted.

On another occasion a young fellow came up to me at the close of my address and said, "May I shake hands with you, sir?"

"Why certainly," I replied.

"It's this way," he went on, getting rather red in the face, "there's a girl I know back in Canada who reads all your books."

"That's nice of her," I said.

"Yes. She's an awfully nice girl," he admitted. "The fact is I hope to marry her when I get back."

"You are engaged to her?" I questioned.

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"Not yet," he said. "But I hope to be. And if I can tell her that I've shaken hands with you it'll help me a lot."

"In that case," I laughed. "We'll shake hands twice." And we did!

The last Sunday I spent in Belgium I lunched with a Colonel McDonald, who was in command of a Canadian Scotch Regiment. Though born in Canada he was tremendously proud of his descent. Over our coffee and pipes after lunch he told me several good stories, one of which has stuck in my memory ever since. It was illustrative of Scottish thrift. I cannot give it in the Scotch vernacular as he did.

An old man lay dying. By his side sat his wife waiting in silence. Close to the bed on a little round table burned a solitary candle.

For a long time the silence continued unbroken. Then the old woman rose from her chair. "Donald," she said, "I'm going into the kitchen and I may be 'awa' some considerable time; but if thou shouldst take thy departure before I return, first blow out the light."

I returned from Belgium by way of Lille, where I spent a night, and then went on a tour through parts of Flanders and Northern France. I was curious to see some of the ruin and desolation that war had wrought, but I have some-

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times wished since that I had held my curiosity in check.

I had spent an afternoon among the ruins of Louvain, and had seen the shattered houses of Namur and Dinant. But these were still crowded and busy cities, and life went on in them much as usual. But in France and Flanders the desolation was in many places absolute and complete.

I saw villages that were simply heaps of brick and mortar and from which all life had fled, towns and cities that were a vast wilderness of ruins, farmsteads that were shattered beyond repair, orchards and plantations where every tree was a blackened stump and would never bloom again, fields that were pock-marked with shell holes, villas and chateaux that were roofless and windowless and where wrought iron gates were twisted into grotesque shapes, churchyards where every tombstone was broken into splinters, churches with a single pillar standing as if to accentuate the desolation; long stretches of weed-grown country zig-zagged with barbed wire; and everywhere cemeteries; acres and acres of little white crosses, and here and there a clump of graves in a corner of a field; and over all a great silence and stillness.

Those lonely cemeteries held a curious fascination. Here slept the flower of England's manhood, the young men who should have founded families and helped to make great the

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state. To what purpose their education, their long years of training, their skill, their talent, their genius? The war had passed. Their comrades had returned and left them behind to moulder into dust. Never did I realize so vividly the pity and pathos and futility of it all.

And all this to pander to the vanity of a fool, and to gratify the ambition of a few reckless men. I wondered then as I have often wondered since whether the world will ever outgrow its folly or whether it will go stumbling down through blood and ruin to its utter destruction.

It was good to get back again to England's "green and pleasant land." Yet as I travelled up from Folkestone in the warm sunshine of late April and looked at the quiet villages nestled in the lap of the hills, and saw the orchards white with blossom, and the meadows deep in grass, and the primroses making a yellow mist of the railway cuttings, I could not help thinking of the stark desolation I had left behind. We had suffered much but we had been saved from the foot of the invader.

The first thing I did after I got home was to see my story "Nancy" through the press, it having finished its course as a serial during my absence.

Then I set to work to write "Watchers in the Dawn," which I completed before the end of

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the year. That done I felt that I had written enough—perhaps too much. Also I was tired and the long strain of the war had left its mark. I said to myself I will rest now and give up writing. It is quite time I laid down my pen for good.

A few weeks later I met Jeffery Farnol at the club, and as we sat chatting over our coffee, he asked me what I was doing.

"Nothing," I said, "I don't think I shall write another book."

"Oh, that is nonsense," he laughed. "You are good for many years yet and many more books."

"Perhaps," I answered. "But I don't feel like it at present."

"Feelings be hanged," he protested. "You wait a bit."

To my surprise there appeared in the *Daily Express* on the following day a half column article accompanied by my photograph, in which it was announced that I had given up writing and had retired for good. It was a pleasant, kindly article, but who wrote it I don't know; not "Jack" Farnol, and yet he was the only one to whom I had talked about the matter. At least I could think of no other.

I presume that some Pressman had been sitting near us and had overheard our talk.

Parts of the article got copied into newspapers in all parts of the country and for a few

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days I was inundated with letters and interviewers.

I did my best to explain, but who cares about explanations, or takes the trouble to read them?

The *Express* story had got the start, and some of my friends still wonder why, having made a statement of my intentions, I do not stick to it.

It is by no means as easy to do nothing as it looks. I tried it for a few months, but the experiment was anything but a success. Work becomes a habit. I presume idleness may become a habit also, but habits are not easily formed late in life. To be really proficient in idleness one should start young.

For the last year or two my principal public work has been in connexion with the League of Nations. There is nothing else in my judgment that can compare with it in importance. I regard it as the greatest Christian movement of the century and whether it succeeds or fails it is a fine attempt to carry into effect the teachings of the New Testament.

Unfortunately the statesmen of most countries appear to care little for Christianity. Its simple ethic gets in the way and cuts athwart their ambition. They pay it lip service for the sake of appearances but do nothing to speed it on.

The Jingo and militarists remain true to type. I notice in the papers that a certain General Sir Ivor Maxse has been speaking of the

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League of Nations as "tosh, nothing but tosh," and predicting with apparent glee an early renewal of war. He speaks of himself as being one of those "who do something," as though war were a profitable industry instead of a blight on the industry of the world.

Such people I suppose have to be borne with. For myself I am proud to take my stand by the side of such men as Rendel Harris and Gilbert Murray and Lord Robert Cecil and Viscount Grey; glad in my old age to bear my share of the burden of speaking up and down the country in defence of so splendid an ideal.

The League of Nations is the world's one hope. Without it the nations are doomed.

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